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VOL. II.  
THE HORIZONS OF THOUGHT

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MEDIEVAL  
PANORAMA

VOL. II

*The Horizons of Thought*

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### 31. FROM SCHOOL TO UNIVERSITY

In this field admirable pioneer work was done by the late A. F. Leach, in his *Schools of Medieval England* and elsewhere; and we have Hastings Rashdall's monumental *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, of which an edition has been published since his death, revised, corrected, and very fully annotated by Professor Powicke and Principal Emden. The reader who cannot find time for this three-volume monograph will find compendious essays, clear and trustworthy, by Rashdall and Professor G. R. Potter in *The Cambridge Medieval History*. "In England, from the first," writes Leach, "education was the creature of religion; the school was an adjunct of the Church, and the schoolmaster was an ecclesiastical officer. For close on eleven hundred years, from 598 to 1670, all educational institutions were under exclusively ecclesiastical control. The law of education was a branch of the Canon Law. The Church courts had exclusive jurisdiction over schools and universities and colleges, and until 1540 all schoolmasters and scholars were clerks, or clerics or clergy, and in Orders, though not necessarily holy Orders." So definitely was this the case, that at an eminent grammar school like Canterbury the master had even the terrible weapon of excommunication at his disposal, as decreed by Canon Law against anyone who should assault a cleric. In 1314, "Thomas of Birchwood, scholar of the said school, being summoned *ex officio* for many delinquencies against the law of the aforesaid school, viz. hindering the vice-monitor and his scholars from their public teaching, and also for a violent assault on Master Walter, the vice-monitor, appeared and was sworn, and confessed that he had violently assaulted the said Walter".<sup>1</sup> Master Walter was doubtless a Master of Grammar, of that degree to which we shall presently come; and the aggressor was therefore cut off from

the communion of the faithful until he should have done due penance.

All this is true not only in England but everywhere north of the Alps. In Italy a good many Roman grammar schools probably survived from imperial times, so that at Milan or Siena, for instance, the present school may well be unbrokenly continuous from its ancestor under the Roman Empire. Consequently, education was much more of a lay matter in Italy throughout the Middle Ages. In England, the first Church decree on the subject is that of the Council of Cloveshoe in 747, which aimed at the establishment of an elementary school in every parish. Eugenius II (826) decreed something of the same kind for all Europe. About 994, an English synod prescribed "that priests shall keep schools in the villages and teach small boys without fee: priests ought always to keep schools of schoolmasters in their houses, and if any of the faithful is willing to give his little ones to be educated he ought to receive them willingly and teach them kindly". That decree, however, is only slightly varied from one of Theodulph, Bishop of Orleans, in 797; which itself repeated a decree of 682 at Constantinople—that is, among people of ancient culture, untouched by the barbarian invasions. Leach writes truly, "applied either to France in the days of Charlemagne or England in the days of Ethelred, these can have been little more than a pious aspiration".

Our next evidence comes from one Aelfric, a pupil of Dunstan, who was Abbot of Eynsham in 1005. His *Colloquy*, a dialogue in Latin for the instruction of schoolboys, gives us a very vivid picture of school at that time. To begin with, we find the rough material. The teacher asks: "Who are you here before me?" and one pupil answers for "us boys" (*nos pueri*). The list of pupils includes a professed monk, ploughmen, shepherds, cowherds, fishermen, fowlers, merchants, shoemakers, hunters and bakers. We must not, of course, take this catalogue too literally; the writer's business was to bring in as many occupations as possible, in order to increase the vocabulary of his scholars. Yet it was necessary for the list to have some sort of verisimilitude. The French

grammars of our childhood did indeed ask: "Have you the green penholder of my wife's aunt?" but not "Have you the green blouse and skirt of my wife's uncle?" We have no reason to doubt that there was very much the same mixture among early scholars in a village or town school as there was later in the early days of the universities. Next, the book throws light upon discipline. The teacher asks: "Are you ready to be flogged while you learn?" (*Vultis flagellari in discendo?*). The pupils answer: "We would rather be flogged for learning's sake than be ignorant"; but they add ingratiatingly: "We know that thou art a humane man, and wilt not beat us unless our conduct compels thee."<sup>2</sup> This trait is corroborated everywhere in medieval scholastic records. The great philosopher John the Scot is said to have been slain by his pupils at Malmesbury Abbey with their pens. Abbot Guibert of Nogent gives a heartrending description of his own days under a private tutor; and Caesarius of Heisterbach [1250] reckons that if a boy dies at school he may well deserve the palm of martyrdom.

Again, all the records of the period show the miserable quality of texts and reference books. Even Boethius, the great popularizer, in his book on geometry gives little but a selection of enunciations of propositions of Euclid without the demonstrations. In pre-Conquest England there were schools nominally at each episcopal see, where the clergy were centred and, generally, in practice at most of them. But King Alfred complains of the immense ignorance of his time; and, though we must not exaggerate the contrast introduced by the Normans, we have little record of schools until we come to the Conquest. From that time forward we may sometimes find elementary schools in parishes, with occasional monastic and episcopal schools. The elementary school, as we have seen, depended on the goodwill of the particular priest. The grammar schools seem, at first, to have been generally offshoots of the episcopal schools, which, at their best, taught a certain amount of philosophy and theology, but in which a large proportion of scholars would get no farther than the grammar. Very seldom do we find a monk teaching in any



grammar school, nor were such, as a rule, founded by monks; although the community of the adjacent monastery was very commonly made into governors of the school, and entrusted with its finances. The monks, contrary to a venerable superstition, were not the ordinary schoolmasters of the Middle Ages. This truth has been emphasized as definitely by Professor Mandonnet, late rector of the Roman Catholic University of Fribourg, as by anyone else. It transpires clearly from St Benedict's Rule that he contemplates monastic education only for the "oblates"; that is, children offered to the monastery and destined to take the vows when they grew up and never to leave the precincts until their death. However, under early missionary conditions, the monks did fairly often teach outsiders; just as, for instance, they sometimes built then their own rough buildings. In our period, however, the only "external" schools in the monasteries were the song and almonry schools. The former was mainly a choir school, of comparatively late growth. When, early in the thirteenth century, every great church built its Lady Chapel and had its supplementary services of Our Lady, it was natural that the monks should commit the singing there to hired boys; and, again, that they should not leave those boys entirely without education. But these song schools were very small—from half a dozen to a dozen pupils. The almonry school, again, like the song school, we scarcely find except in the later Middle Ages, and in the larger monasteries. The almoner gradually began to accept it as one of his duties to board and feed a certain number of young clerics who were anxious to pursue their education; and the monks hired a schoolmaster to teach them. We may emphasize that word "hired", for it is extremely rare to find the monks themselves teaching either in the choir or in the almonry school. We can form a rough statistical conception of these monastic schools. I do not think any one who has studied the monastic records would reckon more, at the Dissolution, than 30 almonry and 30 choir schools in the country, with an average attendance of 12 and 6 respectively. This would give 540 scholars. The number of other schools in England, grammar and elementary, would not

be put by the most optimistic calculation higher than 500, with an average attendance of 50 pupils.\* We should thus get, in all, less than 26,000 pupils for a population of some 5,000,000. The present-day population of England and Wales is 35,000,000 souls; seven times as many as at the Reformation. With that population, at the medieval rate, we should have only 182,000 pupils, spaced among nearly 4000 schools whose average standard inclined rather to the elementary than to the grammar class. Yet we have in fact, according to *Whitaker's Almanac* for 1931, 1300 secondary schools with an aggregate of 200,000 boys and 180,000 girls, to which must be added 20,000 elementary schools with an attendance of 5,000,000; that is, nearly thirty times more scholars in proportion to population. Nobody will attempt to insist upon those bare figures as conclusive in themselves; the newspapers remind us constantly and healthily of the shortcomings of many modern educational methods. But at least they show how much more seriously book-learning is considered by modern Church and State than by our forefathers.

For it was not that our ancestors were held back by physical difficulties alone. True, they were partly unable, but they were also unwilling; and this is so weighty a matter that it must be given the emphasis which it deserves. I wrote in my *Medieval Village*: "That jealousy of primary education, which remains one of the vividest political pictures in the minds of those who remember the struggle of 1870 and the following years, must be multiplied fourfold when we think ourselves back to the Middle Ages." This has aroused so much misunderstanding that I must try to explain myself here, even at the risk of prolixity and repetition.<sup>3</sup>

Medieval theories of State and Society postulated a far sharper division of classes than we have to-day: that truth is sometimes emphasized even more definitely by the champions than by the critics of medieval ideals. The three main

\* If it be true that St Paul's School in London was founded for as many as 153 boys in 1510, that is the largest number known at so early a date. Winchester had 86, Eton rather less. (Lupton's *Colet*, p. 64.)

classes were the Churchman for prayer, the soldier for fighting, and the peasant or artisan for labour. There was much natural jealousy against trespass from one division into another, especially if the trespasser were of the labouring class. Even the very democratic author of *Piers Plowman* looks upon it as a topsy-turvy world where "bondmen's bairns be made bishops" (though this, indeed, was of extreme rarity) "and soapsellers and their sons for silver have been knights". St Thomas Aquinas, again, in his commentary on Aristotle's *Politics*, reproduces without comment (though in other cases he feels called upon to protest) the Master's ideal of peasantry: men strong of arm, dull of intellect, and so distrustful of each other as to form no menace to the State.<sup>4</sup> Again, we have that petition of the English House of Commons to the king in 1391, that no bondman should be suffered to send his sons to school, "in order to advance them by clergy". Richard II, it is true, rejected that petition; but a similar attitude meets us everywhere in the Middle Ages, even more on the Continent than in England. It was a like spirit which inspired the notorious objections of the medieval clergy to vernacular translations; objections which Chaucer's contemporary Trevisa met so fully and so wittily in the Preface to his own translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*.<sup>5</sup> In that dialogue, the cleric objects flatly: "It needeth not that all such [men as understand no Latin] should know the Chronicles." This jealous exclusiveness on the part of the educated classes was enormously increased, as we shall see in a later chapter, by the appearance of the Lollard Bible and the claims of unlearned folk to read the Scriptures in their own tongue.<sup>6</sup> But it had existed from a much earlier period; and, after all, it only typified a well-known psychological phenomenon, the specialist's scorn for the amateur. If the Papacy and hierarchy had fought for popular education, religious and secular, with anything like the same energy and persistence with which they asserted the principle of clerical celibacy, for instance, or their own immunity from State taxation, then the story of medieval schools would have been very different. It is quite irrelevant to plead the truism that a bookless man may be

better educated, in reality, than the book-learned. For it is an equally patent truism that, other things being equal, book-learning is one of the most valuable factors in education; and history is far from supporting the implication that illiterate populations are likely to be more moral or religious than the literate.

As our centuries went on, there began to spring up a considerable number of small endowed schools, not merely dependent upon the temporary goodwill of a parish priest or a parish clerk. Such foundations became specially common from about 1350 onwards, when benefactions to monasteries were rapidly drying up, and men preferred to seek purgatorial relief for their souls not by endowing monks to sing for them, but by endowing each his separate chantry-priest to celebrate Masses for him to all eternity. It was naturally found unhealthy for priests to be thus endowed, with no work but a daily Mass. Therefore it became more and more common to impose upon them the further duty of keeping an elementary school. This was sometimes gratuitous; but, even when the foundation specified this, it would be natural that fees should creep in sooner or later. At Hull, for instance, in 1476, Alcock, who afterwards became Bishop of Ely and founded Jesus College at Cambridge, instituted a school with a priest to pray for his soul and a clerk to teach song.

Edward VI, who has sometimes been celebrated as Founder of Schools, was more rightly characterized by Leach as Destroyer. It is true that he did found a certain small number of grammar schools, but these were financed by only a small part of the foundations of the chantry schools, which were disestablished and disendowed in his reign on the excuse that their main object was the celebration of superstitious Masses. Meanwhile there had grown up at Cambridge a sort of normal school for teachers. In 1439 a priest named William Bingham sent a petition to the king that "whereas your poor beseecher hath found in western land, over the east party of the way leading from Hampton to Coventry and so forth no farther north than Ripon, 70 schools void or more that were occupied

all at once within 50 years past, because that there is so great scarcity of masters of grammar, whereof as now be almost none, nor none may be had in your Universities over those that needs must be occupied still there", therefore he besought leave to found a college called God's House for "twenty-four scholars for to commence in grammar, and a priest to govern them, for reformation of the same default, for the love of God and in the way of charity".<sup>7</sup> This house itself, however, gradually decayed and was refounded as an ordinary college (Christ's) by the Lady Margaret, mother to Henry VII. Moreover, when the Renaissance began in England, there was a strong sense of crying educational necessities and of emancipation from monopolistic clerical control. When the great Dean of St Paul's, John Colet, founded the grammar school of that cathedral, Erasmus tells us how, "after he had finished all, he left the perpetual care and oversight of the estate and government of it, not to the clergy, not to the bishop, not to the chapter, not to any great minister at court, but amongst married laymen, to the Company of Mercers, men of probity and reputation. And when he was asked the reason of so committing this trust, he answered to this effect: That there is no absolute certainty in human affairs; but for his part, he found less corruption in such a body of citizens than in any other order or degree of mankind."

At the elementary schools the child began naturally with a horn-book, that is a piece of parchment protected by a transparent layer of horn on which were written the alphabet, the Lord's Prayer and one or two most elementary things. Then, as a rule, he was set to learn Latin with the help of the Psalter, so that *psalterium discere* is a common phrase for pupils at an elementary school, and *psalterium docere* for teachers there. Later the so-called "Primer" was invented; and this brings us to Chaucer's Clergeoun. Here Professor Carleton Brown seems clearly right in surmising a typical mixed grammar and song school. Chaucer's little boy of seven is still at his Primer—a book mainly of psalms and ordinary church prayers, but which often contained, before the psalms,

the alphabet and other very elementary matter, in order that it might be used as a school textbook. The boys a little above him learned song also; and he used to listen to them when they practised their hymn to the Virgin. But some of these at least (typified by the *clergeoun's* "*felaue*") sang without understanding more of it than, quite vaguely, this was some sort of hymn to the Virgin. The Clergeoun asks him to construe the words in English; he frankly confesses his inability: "I can no more expound in this mateere; I lernē song, I can but small grammere." Thus, the general indications are in favour of this being an ordinary grammar school; and Professor Brown brings clear proof that song was often taught at such schools.

Among the sidelights on grammar school teaching two are specially illuminating, since the first comes so nearly before Chaucer's lifetime and the second actually within it. The monastic chronicler Higden, in 1327, complains that English boys are compelled to construe their Latin into French; and Trevisa, who translated him, adds that since the Black Death John Cornwall, a grammar master who taught at Oxford, inaugurated a new era by making his boys construe into English; "so that now, in the year of Our Lord 1385, in all the grammar schools children leave French and construe and learn in English." The next case, still more illuminating, is from the register of Bishop Grandisson of Exeter (A.D. 1357): a mandate directed to all archdeacons in his diocese.<sup>8</sup> "We ourselves have learned and learn daily, not without frequent wonder and inward compassion of mind, that among masters or teachers of boys and illiterate folk in our diocese, who instruct them in grammar, there prevails a preposterous and unprofitable method and order of teaching, nay, a superstitious fashion, rather heathen than Christian; for these masters (after their scholars have learned to read or repeat, even imperfectly, the Lord's Prayer, the Ave Maria, the Creed, and the Matins and Hours of the Blessed Virgin, and other such things pertaining to faith and their soul's health, without knowing or understanding how to construe anything of the aforesaid, or decline the words or parse

them), then, I say, these masters make them pass on prematurely to learn other advanced [*magistrales*] books of poetry or metre. Whence it cometh to pass that, grown to man's estate, they understand not the things which they daily read or say : moreover (what is more damnable) through lack of understanding they discern not the Catholic Faith. We, therefore, willing by all means and methods in our power to eradicate so horrible and foolish an abuse, already too deep-rooted in our diocese, do now commit and depute to each of you the duty of warning and enjoining all masters and instructors whatsoever, who preside over Grammar Schools within the limits of his archdeaconry (as, by these letters present, we ourselves strictly command, enjoin, and warn them), that they should not, as hitherto, teach the boys whom they receive as grammar pupils only to read or learn by heart [*literaliter*, 'learn in Latin']; but rather that, postponing all else, they should make them construe and understand the Lord's Prayer, the Ave Maria, the Creed, the Matins and Hours of the Blessed Virgin, and decline and parse the words therein, before permitting them to pass on to other books. Moreover we proclaim that we purpose to confer clerical orders henceforth on no boys but upon such as may be found to have learnt after this method."

We may now pass upwards to the Episcopal Schools. These, and the Universities which were their indirect product, illustrate the pathetic desire for learning in a society struggling out of barbarous illiteracy. There had already been a strong and self-conscious revival under Charlemagne, which is best illustrated by a tale from his *Life* by the Monk of St Gall. The story, though doubtless incorrect in detail, is fundamentally true and significant in its picture of those early knights-errant of learning, who could only count on meeting a few souls as thirsty as themselves, here and there, within the intellectual deserts created by barbarian invasions. "Now it happened, when he [Charles] had begun to reign alone in the western parts of the world, and the pursuit of learning had been almost forgotten throughout all his realm, and the worship of the true Godhead was faint and weak, that two

Scots [i.e. Irishmen] came from Ireland to the coast of Gaul, along with certain traders of Britain. These Scots were unrivalled for their skill in sacred and secular learning: and day by day, when the crowd gathered round them for traffic, they exhibited no wares for sale, but cried out and said, 'Ho, everyone that desires wisdom, let him draw near and take it at our hands; for it is wisdom that we have for sale'."<sup>9</sup> Charlemagne himself was a great patron of learning; he created a sort of Minister of Education in the person of the York scholar Alcuin, and strove, though vainly, to utilize the monasteries as seminaries for the clergy. His successors, after a short while, did little more than mark time; but the ground gained under him was never entirely lost. Then that great revival of civilization about the year 1000 showed itself, among other ways, in a resurrection of learning; here Lanfranc and Anselm were two of the most conspicuous European figures. From that time forward we find a certain number of cathedral schools rapidly developing in the study of classics, philosophy and theology; Paris, Orleans and Chartres were among the most conspicuous here. At Chartres especially, from the time of Bishop Fulbert [1010], these subjects were taught on a sound classical basis; and better Latin was written than anywhere in Europe down to the Renaissance or even beyond. Great representatives of that school are John of Salisbury, Giraldus Cambrensis, Walter Map and Peter of Blois. But the greatest of all these cathedral teachers was Abailard, whose wandering life drove him to teach at several of these episcopal schools. When indeed, after the great tragedies of his life, he retired into a wilderness on the plain of Troyes, pupils still scented him out as the eagle scents his prey; and (to quote the teacher's own words in his *Historia Calamitatum*), "Here, instead of spacious houses, they built themselves little tabernacles; for delicate food they ate nought but herbs of the field and rough country bread; for soft couches they gathered together straw and stubble; nor had they any tables save clods of earth. . . . My scholars, of their own accord, provided me with all necessities, not only in food and raiment but in tilling of the fields and



defraying the cost of the buildings; so that no household care might withdraw me from my studies." He died in 1142, as the John Baptist of the university movement; the last of those of whom it could be said that, wherever they were, a sort of University gathered round them; and, on the other hand, greatest among those who by teaching at Paris raised that cathedral school so high above the rest that it became naturally the first French University.

The word *universitas* has nothing whatever to do with the supposed ideal of universal knowledge. It was one of the ordinary words in classical Latin for a gild or corporation of any kind. Its two synonyms in the Middle Ages were *studium* and *studium generale*. The sudden rise of these great institutions was not due to the initiative of any Pope, nor, again, was any university *directly* formed from any cathedral school, or founded by monks. These facts are brought out no less definitely by the Dominican Father Denifle than by Dr Rashdall at Oxford. The universities rose and attained their great influence by the same natural growth which created trade unions in modern Britain and has made them, in their present power and organization, almost a fourth estate of the realm. It is true that, by about 1300, lawyers had worked out the theory that papal or imperial licence was necessary for the founding of a university, but even these lawyers had to admit that long custom might count also, and that we might have a university "by custom" (*ex consuetudine*), as genuine as if it had been a papal or imperial foundation. At that time, in fact, out of fourteen Universities then existing, only three had been founded by sovereigns and two (or more strictly one-and-a-half) by Popes; and the nine *ex consuetudine* included Paris, Bologna and others of the first rank, together with Oxford and Cambridge here in England.

Bologna and Paris grew up gradually and, so far as can be seen, simultaneously towards the beginning of the last quarter of the twelfth century. Bologna was a gild of students and Paris a gild of masters. The city of Bologna had for some time possessed a great school of Civil Law, founded on the renewed study of Roman Law as collected and codified by

Justinian. Such a nucleus of Civil Law naturally attracted an equally important school of Canon Law. These legists were comparatively elderly students, and comparatively wealthy: later University statutes show us that their incomes were expected to be greater than those of the rest, and the very books they used were written and illuminated on a more expensive scale. It was natural, then, that these foreigners, so far from their home, should form themselves into a gild for mutual protection; or rather into a series of gilds, for there were at least seventeen "nations" at Bologna. Later, when the constitution had crystallized, the executive committee of the University consisted of the heads of these seventeen nations: a fact which, like the similar division into nations at Paris and other universities, tells definitely against the idea that nationalism is a post-Reformation product. These students, then, being essentially well-to-do business men, took the whole management of the University into their own hands, making their teachers into their hired servants. Thus the Professor or Doctor or Master at Bologna (those three titles were originally synonymous at all universities; so that, for instance, what is called a Master of Arts in England is the technical equivalent of a Doctor of Philosophy in Germany) was as definitely subject to his pupils as were, for instance, the licensed booksellers (*librarii, stationarii*) or copyists. The professor had no vote in this society, from which he might be expelled at any time. He was obliged to give heavy caution money if he left the city for a time, lest, like a modern football expert, he should be enticed by higher offers to sell his services elsewhere. He had to give caution money for behaviour at lectures; for unpunctuality he was fined, or for not reaching certain stages of the law-text that he expounded by certain dates in the term; or, again, for reaching those statutory dates by illegitimate skipping of any part of the text. Moreover, the ordinary absence of copyright which we find everywhere in medieval literary life was intensified in his case. We shall presently see how he may be said to have been subjected even to the negation of copyright. So far, Bologna and those Italian and other univer-

sities which imitated her formed an exception to the ordinary gild regulations of the Middle Ages. It was, perhaps, unique to find a gild of pupils in any calling who were entitled to hold their masters in subjection. Paris, however, with Oxford and Cambridge and many others, followed the regular gild system. There, the undergraduate was the apprentice. Half way through his course, just as the apprentice to a saddler or a tailor became a "journeyman" (that is, thenceforward he received a small wage while still continuing to learn), so also, at the University, a *baccalaureus* was one who had not yet obtained a regular degree; he had only reached the midway stage of pupil-teacher. When, at the end of his seven years, he had become master, and was thenceforward qualified to teach at any other university, he received this mastership by the double ceremony of *traditio* and *inceptio*. He was crowned with a master's cap,\* and he then gave a specimen lesson; very much as the tailor and the saddler attained mastership at the end of their seven years by public proof of capacity in a "masterpiece".

This *traditio*, this handing over of the tools of the trade, had an interesting exemplification at Cambridge, at least in the case of a Master of Grammar. For this degree it was not necessary to have gone through the whole Arts course (i.e. the grammar, rhetoric and philosophy course) but simply so much of it as was needed for teaching in a grammar school. At the inception of a Master of Grammar, the University bedel was bound to supply a rod, a "palmer" (that is, a flat piece of wood resembling a fives-bat for punishment on the palm) and a "shrewd boy" (that is, not specially good tempered or well behaved). After performing on the boy, the candidate had to pay him 4*d.* for his "labour", and the same sum to the bedel for his loan of the instruments.

All this followed a medieval routine very natural for times when evidence was often difficult to procure, and therefore general notoriety was of extreme value. It was the *traditio* of the ring to a bishop which gave rise to one of the most

\* Medieval master-masons may be seen portrayed with such caps on their tombstones, as we shall see in Chapter XIII.

important political contests of the Middle Ages, the so-called "Investiture" struggle; and, again, readers of Chaucer will remember how the Wife of Bath had received all her husbands "at the church door", marriage being thus publicly performed in order to secure the greatest possible number of witnesses.

Rashdall was convinced (though his modern editors are more hesitant) that Oxford owes its origin to the quarrel between Henry II and Becket. Certainly the king commanded the English clergy to return from abroad "as they valued their benefices". Some at least of these would be abroad because they were studying at Paris, the greatest theological and philosophical school of the West. Again, presently after this command, we find that Oxford, of which hitherto we can only say that it had been one of the three or four most conspicuous schools in England, emerges as an organized gild of teachers, requiring certain formalities for admission to its select society of masters. Cambridge, again, would seem still more certainly to have been an offshoot from Oxford. In 1209 a bloody affray between scholars and citizens led to a dispersion of Oxford University. The scholars scattered into groups; one such group is recorded to have settled at Cambridge; and in 1229 we find definite evidence of a real organization there.

The first statutes at these Universities were naturally disciplinary, connected with attendance and behaviour at lectures; this has been well brought out by Mr Emden. The next were economic, mainly concerned with house rents. Since at first there were no colleges, the students lodged as best they could; and, similarly, the masters hired rooms as best they could for their lectures. With the growth of numbers, there was a natural tendency for certain houses to become regular students' lodgings; some in fact evidently became a sort of rabbit-warren of students. Ordinary processes of free bargaining were powerless to settle the continual small disputes and difficulties; and therefore the University authorities stepped in to make regular terms with the Town, over which they always had considerable power, since the

"cessation" of a university and the transference of its students elsewhere meant considerable pecuniary loss to the citizens. This was, in fact, the masters' strongest form of protest. Such temporary migrations were frequent in the Middle Ages, and led sometimes, as we have seen in the case of Cambridge, to the formation of a fresh university. One such migration from Oxford to Stamford left such an impression upon history that, almost until the lifetime of living men, no man was allowed to take his master's degree at Oxford without swearing that he would not attempt to recognize the rival college of Stamford, a gate of which still survives as a memorial of this short-lived rebellion. Again, when Walter de Merton (1264) founded what was then the richest college in Oxford, he bought a large house and grounds at Cambridge, together with some outlying manors, in order that, if any other dispersion took place at Oxford—whether temporary or permanent—his scholars might still have a *pied à terre* at the younger University.

But here we must return to the lodgings. The Universities succeeded in asserting their claim that, when a house had once been occupied by scholars, it might not be let above their heads to anyone else, though the owner might resume it for his own habitation. At a very early date, so early that we have no definite evidence, this system naturally developed into the "Hall" or Hostel. Mr Emden has proved that, at the earliest period of documentary evidence, these Halls were a matter of private speculation. A master hired a house with sufficient room for himself to teach in and enough chambers to house his pupils. Private speculations, however, meant temptation to profiteering; and we find the Universities legislating against natural abuses arising from masters who postponed educational and moral to economic considerations. Yet, at their worst, the inmates of these Halls were evidently far more orderly than the so-called chamber-deacons, students living singly or in pairs about the town, whom we find the University discouraging by its decrees. Finally [in 1483] a whole body of statutes was issued by the authorities for the control of all the Halls in Oxford, of which by that time

there were more than sixty. Some of these Halls or Hostels, in their later development, were practically what we call now a College. Some were already attracting endowments to themselves, and this basis of endowment and corporate government is what constitutes a College. *Collegium* (like *Universitas*) was an ancient Latin word for gilds of any kind; and the term was naturally applied as soon as these associations had crystallized into sufficient consistency to make collective bargaining possible—that is, as soon as the body was sufficiently definite to sue and be sued in law as a person.

The earliest Colleges were the convents of friars, and later on of monks. The friars especially began settling at universities (especially Bologna and Paris) even in the lifetime of St Francis and St Dominic; and the friaries there constructed set a pattern for future students' associations. The monks came only later and had far less influence upon the universities. Then generous benefactors began founding what now began to be called definitely Colleges; and these endowed corporations grew so numerous and powerful, and became such an integral part of University life in England, especially after the Reformation, that it is our first task with an intelligent foreigner to explain to him the difference between a College and a University. To put it in its briefest form, we have to say that modern Oxford and Cambridge are each a Federative Republic of Letters in which the Colleges play much the same part as the Cantons in the Swiss Federation.

We may now come to College life. New College at Oxford (1379) was the first at either University to be built on a complete and fully enclosed quadrangle, and to admit undergraduates. It was mainly an educational continuation of Wykeham's grammar school foundation at Winchester. Even to the end, our Colleges were not primarily destined for undergraduates, but for graduates studying for higher degrees in Theology, Law, etc. Dr H. E. Salter writes:<sup>10</sup> "I estimate that in 1360 the six colleges which then existed would contain about 10 undergraduates, 23 bachelors, and 40 masters. The founding of New College nearly doubled these figures, but if all the Colleges had been dissolved in 1400 it would not

have been a crushing blow to the University." In the fifteenth century the undergraduate element grew considerably stronger, and "pensioners" were admitted, i.e. students who were not on the foundation, but paid for their own maintenance. "It may come as a surprise to many to learn that no medieval college contained what we call commoners or was founded for teaching, and that the college system so called dates from about 1560." Thus, even in the later Middle Ages, the Halls continued to be recognized as the normal academical home of undergraduates. Even then, however, the chamber-deacons were not altogether eliminated, and much of the wilder side of University life was due to these men, living more or less irresponsibly in private lodgings. In the Halls, and sometimes at least in the Colleges, three or four shared a room, and probably they slept two in a bed. An admirable picture of the life of a poor but orderly student in the golden days of the thirteenth century occurs in the Biography of St Richard Wych, Bishop of Chichester. His father was wealthy and would have married him advantageously: but the youth was already devoted to learning. "Richard therefore hastily left both [his father's] lands and the lady, and all his friends, and betook himself to the University of Oxford and then to that of Paris, where he learned logic. Such was his love of learning, that he cared little or nothing for food or raiment. For, as he was wont to relate, he and two companions who lodged in the same chamber had only their tunics, and one gown between them, and each of them a miserable pallet. When one, therefore, went out with the gown to hear a lecture, the others sat in their room, and so they went forth alternately; and bread with a little wine and pottage sufficed for their food. For their poverty never suffered them to eat flesh or fish, save on the Sunday or on some solemn holy day or in presence of companions or friends; yet he hath oftentimes told me how, in all his days, he had never after led so pleasant and delectable a life."<sup>11</sup>

Richard and his friends were, of course, model private lodgers, in strong contrast with those "chamber-deacons" of whom an Oxford statute complains that "they sleep all day,

and at night roam about taverns and houses of ill fame for opportunity of robbery and homicide"—men with whom we may parallel those Irish, Scottish and Welsh scholars of whom the House of Commons twice complained to the king (1422 and 1429) that, "not having whereby they might live, they committed divers manslaughter, murders, rapes and robberies about the country"; and finally organized a system of blackmail by keeping the surrounding districts in a state of siege. It is a significant commentary on this that, as we have already seen, habitual night-walking, stalking abroad after curfew, was punished by twice the fine which an undergraduate incurred by shooting an arrow at the proctor with attempt to wound him. Equally characteristic medieval contrasts are brought out by Professor C. H. Haskins, in his *Studies in Medieval Culture*. On the one hand, at Bologna, "an assault with a cutlass in the classroom was charged [to the offender] as a loss of time and money to the assembled scholars". On the other hand, a students' manual at Paris points out that the best models of academical deportment are afforded by the graven images in the churches. J. R. Green, in his *Short History of the English People*, has drawn from life two pictures that cannot be bettered of the modern scholar: St Edmund Rich the hero of orthodoxy, and Roger Bacon the hero, and to some extent martyr, of independent research.

The chronic and bitter feuds between Town and Gown, with those even fiercer fights between different nationalities—for North and South of the Trent did so regard each other—prompted Rashdall to suggest that more than one famous battle-field might perhaps be found upon which less blood has been shed per square yard than upon the Oxford High Street. A specimen may be given here from the Oxford Coroner's Rolls of 1314:<sup>12</sup> The jury "say upon their oath that, on the Saturday aforesaid, after the hour of noon, the Northern clerks on the one part, and the Southern and Western clerks on the other, came to St John's Street and Grope Lane with swords, bucklers, bows, arrows and other arms, and there they fought together; and in that conflict Robert de Bridlington, Adam de Alderbeck, Richard de



Louthby and Richard de Holwell stood together in a certain soler [upper chamber] in Gutter Hall, situate in St John's Street, shooting down through a window into Grope Lane: and there the said Robert de Bridlington, with a small arrow, smote the aforesaid Henry of Holy Isle and wounded him hard by the throat, on the left side in front; and the wound was of the breadth of one inch, and in depth even unto the heart: and thus he slew him. Moreover the aforesaid jury say that [the others above-named] incited the said Robert to shoot the same Henry dead, and to slay him, and they were consenting unto his death. . . . And in the same conflict John de Benton came with a falchion into Grope Lane and gave David de Kirkby a blow on the back of the head, six inches in length, and in depth even unto the brain. At which same time came William de la Hyde and smote the aforesaid David with a sword across his right knee and leg: and at the same time came William de Astley and smote the said David under the left arm with a misericorde, and thus slew him. Moreover, concerning the goods of the aforesaid evil-doers, or those who have received them, the jury say that they know nothing."

The Oxford Composition of 1252 between the Irish scholars and the rest reads like a treaty of peace between two nations after war. Moreover, the most serious offences were by no means confined to junior men. Out of the 77 gravest offenders recorded in the Oxford Chancellor's Book, 47 are undergraduates and 30 senior men. At Cambridge, in 1418, the Chancellor of the University and the prior of the Augustinian convent egg on the students to riot outside the mayor's house: and next year the aggrieved ex-mayor wants to fight out the quarrel hand-to-hand with the same chancellor, in the church in which they had met to try and patch up the dispute. In 1254 we find an M.A. of Michaelhouse heading an attack made on King's College "with guns and habiliments of war": in 1533 an attempt is made to force an election by repairing to the Senate house with clubs and swords: and of Dr Crayforde, Master of Clare Hall and twice Vice-Chancellor about this same time, his contemporary Dr Caius says that he

was as good a gladiator as Vice-Chancellor: that he cut off one man's hand and threw another by main force out of the Senate house.

Moreover, manslaughter enjoyed even greater chances of impunity at our Universities than elsewhere in medieval society. In the "Great Slaughter" at Oxford between Town and Gown in 1354, out of the 39 man-slayers two were never identified, 22 escaped altogether, four fled to sanctuary, and therefore were only banished, three claimed the privilege of the clergy, and one who would have claimed this had died meanwhile in prison. This leaves only a balance of seven, of whom one or two may have been hanged. Robert of Bridlington, who had shot that fatal arrow from the window of Gutter Hall in 1314, survived for many years, to perish in a later fray with the citizens. Sometimes, in fact, the Oxford scholar was requested to go to prison; and Dr Rashdall, with a touch of friendly malice which even Cantabs must forgive in so great a scholar, suggests that the worst that could happen to a medieval Oxford felon, short of unusually bad luck, would be to go and finish his studies at Cambridge.

The constant use of the word "poor" in foundation statutes has led modern readers very naturally to imagine that benefactors' endowments were originally intended for a class very much worse off than those who enjoy them at present. This, however, rests upon a misunderstanding of medieval legal common-form. By Canon Law it was strictly forbidden to transfer to secular purposes any endowment which had been given to the Church. But nearly all the endowments conferred on our Colleges were of that kind. Peterhouse and Corpus Christi at Cambridge, for instance, were both founded mainly on the income of a parish church, which was served by the Fellows. It was therefore necessary for the foundation deed to emphasize the fact that the new institution was itself one of pious charity. Leach and Rashdall have both shown conclusively that foundation statutes anticipated, not a proletarian standard of scholastic life, but that of the middle, and not even of the lower middle, class. At Winchester College, where the phrase "poor" is very

conspicuous, the founder inserts a special clause giving preference to his own kin for entrance to the College, and he was one of the greatest capitalists in England; moreover, Leach traced among the earliest pupils a very large proportion of sons of county families. Yet this "charitable" clause was very naturally appealed to by medieval disciplinarians. Here, for instance, is a paragraph from the statutes of King's College, Cambridge: "Since it befitteth not poor men, and specially such as live by charity, to give the children's bread unto dogs, and we find it written elsewhere *Vae sit eis in peccatum, qui in avibus coeli ludunt*,\* therefore we command, ordain and will that no scholar, fellow, chaplain, clerk, or servant whatsoever to the said King's College, do keep or possess dogs, hunting or fishing nets, ferrets, falcons, or hawks; nor shall they practise hunting or fishing. Nor shall they in any wise have or hold within our Royal College, singly or in common, any ape, bear, fox, stag, hind, fawn, or badger, or any other such ravening or unaccustomed or strange beast, which neither profit us nor can harm us.† Furthermore, we forbid and expressly interdict the games of dice, hazard, ball and all noxious inordinate unlawful and dishonest sports, and especially all games which afford a cause or occasion for loss of coin, money, goods or chattels of any kind whatsoever, whether within King's College or elsewhere within the University. . . . And it is our will firmly and expressly to prohibit all of the aforesaid fellows etc. from shooting arrows, or casting or hurling stones, javelins, wood, clods or anything whatsoever, and from making or practising, singly or in common, in person or by deputy, any games or castings whatsoever, within the aforesaid King's College or its enclosed precincts or gardens, whereby, directly or indirectly, the Chapel or Hall or other buildings or edifices of our said College may suffer any sort of harm or loss in the glass

\* Baruch iii. 17: "Woe unto those in sin, that take their diversion with the birds of the air."

† I.e. who do not afford the hunter's excuse as expressed in *Piers Plowman*, that he is defending society or property from these wild beasts. (See p. 35.)

windows, walls, roofs, coverings, or any other part thereof, within or without. *Item*, whereas through incautious and inordinate games in the Chapel or Hall of our said King's College, which might perchance be practised therein by the wantonness of some students, the said Chapel and Hall might be harmed and even deformed in its walls, stalls, paintings and glass windows; we therefore, desiring to provide against such harm, do strictly command that no casting of stones or balls or of anything else soever be made in the aforesaid collegiate Chapel, Cloisters, Stalls, or Hall; and we forbid that dancing or wrestling, or other incautious and inordinate sports whatsoever, be practised at any time within the Chapel, Cloister or Hall aforesaid."<sup>13</sup>

This was in imitation of William of Wykeham, who had found it necessary for the protection of the carved reredos in the Chapel of New College to prohibit dancing or jumping either in the Chapel or in the adjoining Hall. That will remind us of Chaucer's Clerk :

*In twenty manere koude he trippe and daunce*

*(After the scole of Oxenfordē tho).*

*And with his leggēs casten to and fro.*

But a Cambridge man may be permitted to point out that Oxford had no monopoly here, since the King's College statutes repeated that prohibition also.

Wykeham specifies chess among the "noxious, inordinate and dishonest games" forbidden at New College, a prohibition which has excited astonishment among those who do not realize that this game was very commonly forbidden to the clergy throughout the Middle Ages, probably because it was nearly always played for money. Manslaughter at chess is a not uncommon episode in medieval romance. Indeed, everywhere in the records of that time we find natural allusions to quarrels at games, seeing that the umpire and referee were officials as yet unborn. The tendency of collegiate and aularian statutes is on the whole distinctly against games and sports, yet we must not ignore the fact that the aularian statutes of Oxford [1483] provide that "all members, on being directed by their principal to go off to the fields or other

places whatsoever on account of proper recreation, and the honour . . . of the Hall, shall repair there together and return in like manner; and none of them shall stay at home, except for some reasonable cause and with the leave of the principal, on penalty of twopence". On the other hand, for the member of a Hall to be abroad alone without excuse entailed a fine of a farthing. The provisions, in fact, are such as we should expect in a modern Continental ecclesiastical seminary. For table-manners, we have the same sort of indication as for those in the monasteries. Professor Haskins quotes from a manual of advice for students. "Let not a mouthful, once touched with the fingers, be put back into the dish; touch not thine ears or nostrils with naked fingers; cleanse not thy teeth with the steel that is sharpened for those that eat with thee. . . . He who would drink [at the common cup] must first empty his mouth, and let his lips first be wiped; nor can I avoid this warning: Let him not gnaw the bone with his teeth."<sup>14</sup>

Yet, though colleges were not founded for the very poor, there was much more variety in the medieval university between student and student than in modern times, even when we take account of the immense influx of scholars from elementary schools within this last generation. There were great contrasts in age. If we may take the Exeter registers as typical, there would be at any given time about 600 incumbents distributed between Oxford and Cambridge; and, although a very large number of these might be mere school-boys, yet some also would be quite elderly men. In wealth, again the contrasts were great. When begging was strictly forbidden by English statute, exception was made for those undergraduates who had official licences to beg; and we know that Luther got through his university course very much on those terms. Again, the length of the summer vacation may possibly point to the need of manual work both in the hay harvest and in the corn harvest. Dr Salter emphasizes the surprising fact that, in those later generations for which we have fairly full records, "undergraduates in Halls remained at Oxford in the long vacation, and that in Halls the year

was not divided into three terms of eight or nine weeks, but into four terms each of twelve weeks. . . . The commoners remained in Oxford for the whole year, and their tutors had no holiday in the long vacation. If this was so, we wonder why the University had a long Vacation, inasmuch as neither tutors nor pupils nor servants took a holiday. Perhaps the explanation may be that the Calendar common to our universities had its origin in some early university in the south, where the heat made it difficult to work in July, August, and September." It might perhaps seem more natural to connect it with what we know of the earliest generations of students, namely, that their economic position was very precarious. In those circumstances, nothing would be more natural than that at medieval Oxford and Cambridge, as at modern American Universities, many should be healthily and profitably engaged in bread-winning for some of the summer months. Further, there was a whole class of "servitors" or "sizar"—that is, poor scholars who came up in complete dependence upon a richer companion, or upon menial work to be found at the College. When the Scottish poet, Barbour, an archdeacon and a rich man, procured a safe conduct to Oxford with three "clerks" in his train, those three seem plainly to have held this position with regard to him. The servitor or sizar fed on the remnants of the others' food, and picked up such learning as he could in such time as he could save from his menial duties. We have already seen, also, the peculiarly medieval institution of "charity chests", from which money was lent out without interest to meet the pressing pecuniary necessities of students who could deposit an equivalent pledge.

Let us end with a brief glimpse of this life from the point of view of the student himself. He very often travelled to the University in company. There was a University official, the "carrier" or "fetcher", who would undertake to help him; or again, he would travel in a mutually protective group: for, as we have seen, the undergraduate had a not negligible chance of making his first acquaintance with fellow-undergraduates in their guise of amateur outlaws and bandits, whose activities claimed the interference of parliament. Ar-

rived at the University, he might be accosted by a touting master—there again, the chances are distinctly implied by statutes which emphatically forbid this abuse. Once settled in a College (if he had that good fortune) he would find himself expected to attend his first lectures in the morning at 6 o'clock; candles cost money, and everyone in those days rose with the lark. He would do his washing at a trough in the Hall or in the open court; even at the comparatively aristocratic and rich King's College, Cambridge, inventories of deceased Fellows do not always show any trace of private washing apparatus. The statutes are interesting on this point: "Moreover, we strictly and expressly ordain that no dweller in the aforesaid upper rooms . . . whether in washing his head or hands or feet or any other thing, or in any other manner whatsoever, do spill water, wine, beer, or any other liquor whereby those in the lower rooms may be grieved in their persons, goods or chattels, or in any way molested."<sup>15</sup>

Breakfast was a much less regular institution in the Middle Ages than to-day. The hardy man would go without it, as he went without afternoon tea until this last generation of ours. Dinner was commonly at 10, an hour which survived at Oxford even into the eighteenth century. After this, and a natural interval of rest, work would go on again from 12 or 1 to 5, the hour of supper. When supper was over, to quote King's again as a model, "after grace duly said . . . for that which hath been received . . . then, without further delay, when the loving-cup hath been administered to all who wish to drink, and after the potations in Hall at the hour of curfew, let all the seniors, of whatsoever condition or degree, betake themselves to their studies or to other places, nor let them suffer the junior to tarry longer in Hall, save only on the principal holy-days, or when College Councils are to be held in Hall after the meal, or other arduous business touching the said Royal College; or again when, in honour of God or of His Mother or of some other saint, the fellows are indulged with a fire in Hall at wintertide. Then it shall be lawful for the scholars and fellows, after dinner or supper, to make a decent tarrying in Hall for recreation's sake, with songs and

other honest pastimes, and to treat, in no spirit of levity, of poems, chronicles of realms, and wonders of this world, and other things which are consistent with clerical propriety".<sup>16</sup>

There was very commonly an evening repetition of what had been learned in the day's lectures; but the student would be in bed by 8 or 9. If this seems incredibly strenuous, it must be remembered that the holy-days were also holidays, about 50 in the year; so that the average working week was of five days only. Moreover, we have abundant evidence, especially in complaints from disciplinarian writers or other authorities, that it was common enough for the medieval student, like the modern, to treat his university time as one of enjoyment rather than labour.

The principal alone had a separate room to himself, either in a Hall or in a College. At New College and King's the living rooms were subdivided for two or more students by wooden partitions; and it is characteristic of those foundations that students are specially relieved by statute from the necessity of sleeping two in a bed. After all, perhaps the worst disadvantage to a modern man would be the cold. The lecture halls would often be, especially in earlier days, mere sheds; unceiled, unfloored and unglazed. In Paris, the Street of the Schools was called Straw Street—*Rue du Fouarre*—from the straw which covered the floors, and in which grammarians were obliged to sit without chairs or stools. The cold in winter must have been far worse than even that of ordinary medieval indoor life. The question of books, one of the most important of all in this field, deserves as full treatment presently as my space will permit. But what has been said already may go some way to explain why even the medieval student, though inured to physical discomfort in his ordinary life, was commonly unable to hold out to the last against these hardships and the want of ready money. Official records remain in sufficient quantities to prove that only a small minority ever proceeded even to the half-degree of Bachelor, let alone to Master. At Oxford, about 1450, the average number of full degrees of all kinds was 91.5 a year; at Cambridge the number never rose above 50 until Eliza-



bethan times. The total number of students at Oxford at its highest point, in about 1300, was probably not more than 1500; and in 1450 probably 1000 or less. The commonly repeated statement that there were 30,000 before the Black Death will not bear serious examination of the context from which it is quoted; it is a capital example of medieval irresponsibility in thought and word, in the face of numbers too great to be checked off hand by rule of thumb.<sup>17</sup> Of these students, therefore, it is evident that only a minority proceeded even as far as the half-way B.A.<sup>18</sup> At Leipzig the records are full enough to supply statistics from 1427 onwards.<sup>19</sup> Among those who matriculated, the following percentages proceeded to the B.A. and M.A. respectively :

Group of years	Percentage of B.A.	Percentage of M.A.
1429-32	20.4	3.8
1439-42	27.8	6.9
1449-52	33.9	—
1459-62	38.6	5.6
1469-72	36.0	5.4
1479-82	39.4	4.2
1489-92	38.4	3.4
1499-1502	38.5	4.6
1509-12	26.1	3.4

On the Continent, those who proceeded to the full degree were mostly lawyers: "Law", writes Rashdall, "was the leading faculty in by far the greater number of medieval Universities." There was a current rhyme contrasting the prizes in rank or money to which Medicine and Law might aspire with the poverty of the Arts Scholar with his metaphysical discussions on the Reality of Universals :

*Dat Galensus opes, dat Justinianus honores,  
Sed Genus et Species cogitur ire pedes.*

Chaucer's Clerk of Oxenford will be remembered here :

*As leenē was his hors as is a rake,  
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake.*

England was an exception in regard to this great preponderance of legists, probably because Roman Law weighed so little with us in comparison with Common and Statute Law. This, again, had its significance for English constitutionalism, as contrasted with the Continental despots whose ministers fed them with autocratic pronouncements from Justinian's Code.

## 32. SCHOLASTICS AND BIBLE

The studies of the medieval university were nearly always based upon the "Arts" course. Medieval philosophy followed Aristotle in its division of Arts into the "mechanical" and the "liberal". Mechanical were all that needed manual dexterity, from the cobbler and saddler to the painter and sculptor: indeed, many modern artists, from William Morris to Eric Gill, insist upon this as the only sane definition. Liberal were the arts concerned only with brain-work. These were again divided into sections and subsections by the university authorities. The *Trivium* was the first stage: hence our adjective *trivial* in the sense of "comparatively unimportant". This comprised Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic. Next came the *Quadrivium*, i.e. Arithmetic, Astronomy, Music and Geometry. This was not so great as it sounds; for the first three were studied only in the most elementary sense for Church purposes, even where they were seriously studied at all; and the last, again, only in its most rudimentary forms. After seven years the student became in England and France a Master of Arts, in Germany a Doctor of Philosophy: different phrases for the same thing. This philosophy was the so-called *scholastic*, a product so definitely medieval that it must be clearly defined before we go farther. It can best be described by noting how far it agrees with or differs from the philosophies of ancient Greece and Rome on the one hand; or on the other, those of modern times. With ancient philosophy it agreed in being based upon dialectics, i.e. upon oral discussion by question and answer; so that even in its most elaborate written forms this dialectic conception is always there, if only in the background. It differed, however, from the ancient in being circumscribed within certain definite theological limits. Modern philosophy, on the other hand, differs from the scholastic on both points. It is not usually

dialectic in form; nor again are its foundations circumscribed by authority. This Scholasticism was a natural product of a book-hungry but comparatively bookless age. In the best cathedral schools, teaching had been Socratic. Bishop Fulbert, walking to and fro with his pupils on that cathedral terrace at Chartres where we may still stand and look over the river and the valley, discoursed daily to them upon the deepest questions of life and death; and the two brothers who brought that school to its highest pitch in the first half of the twelfth century, Bernard and Thierry, worked naturally by the same methods.

But the sudden rediscovery of all Aristotle's philosophical writings through translations from the Arabic disturbed the balance of these older schools. The humanists who write towards the close of the twelfth century are full of complaints at the increasing neglect of grammatical and historical training, and the undisciplined rawness of the young philosophers.<sup>1</sup> John of Salisbury and Giraldus Cambrensis complained bitterly on this point; and a century later Roger Bacon spoke out still more plainly, with the exaggeration of personal rivalry. He was a little older than St Thomas Aquinas, of whom and of other conspicuous university philosophers of his time he writes: "These are boys of the two Student Orders . . . who in many cases enter those Orders at or below the age of twenty years. This is the common course, from the English Sea to the farthest confines of Christendom, and more especially beyond the realm of France; so that in Aquitaine, Provence, Spain, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Denmark, and everywhere, boys are promiscuously received into the Orders from their tenth to their twentieth year; boys too young to be able to know anything worth knowing, even though they were not already possessed with the aforesaid causes of human error; wherefore, at their entrance into the Orders, they know nought that profiteth to theology."<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere he enters into greater detail, and criticizes the Scholastics of his age in very much the same terms which might have been used by Hume or Thomas Huxley. Their works, he says, are architecturally most imposing, but they

rest upon an insecure foundation; upon a Bible misunderstood, an Aristotle misunderstood, and almost total neglect of the mathematical and physical sciences. With regard to Aristotle, Bacon is exaggerated and unjust. It is true that his authority was looked upon as almost sacrosanct, second only to that of the Bible; yet the translations which St Thomas Aquinas, among others, caused to be made straight from Greek into Latin for his own use are far more correct than Bacon's words would lead us to suppose. With regard to the Bible, however, it is difficult to exaggerate the disadvantage at which Scholasticism stood under the influence of what may fairly be called the bibliolatry of the Middle Ages. This was, in a great measure, inherited from Judaism. To quote from *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*: "The traditional view is that the Pentateuch in its entirety emanated from God, every verse and letter being consequently inspired; hence the tannaitic statement that 'he who says the Torah is not from Heaven is a heretic, a despiser of the Word of God, one who has no share in the world to come'. . . . Moses wrote the whole Pentateuch at God's dictation, even, according to R. Simeon, the last eight verses, relating to his own death."<sup>8</sup> So, again, according to St Thomas, the primary interpretation of Holy Writ must be the historical or literal. In this sense one word may, indeed, have different significations according to different contexts. But the literal sense is that which the Author intends: and the Author of Holy Writ is God. There can be no falsehood anywhere in the literal sense of Holy Scripture. We must, indeed, make allowance for certain obvious limitations to the theory of plenary inspiration: (1) the limitations of human language, especially at a remote period; (2) limitations imposed by the primitive mentality of the writer's contemporaries; and (3) the fact that figurative or allegorical language lends itself to misinterpretation by hasty or ignorant readers. But he insists that, wherever the *literal* sense conveys a *statement of fact*, that fact must not be questioned. For instance: "Those things which are said of [the Earthly] Paradise in Scripture are put before us by the method of

historical narration. But, in all things which Scripture thus hands down, we must hold to the truth of the story as our foundation, and fabricate our spiritual expositions upon that foundation." Thus [he continues] although the Tree of Life is also a spiritual idea (Proverbs iii. 18), yet there is also an actual Tree of Life growing to the present day in the Earthly Paradise—which Aquinas, of course, located as Dante did.<sup>4</sup> Again, in another section of the *Summa*, St Thomas exemplifies most significantly his view of what might be the literal statement of a passage. Commenting on Exodus xxxiii. 11, "And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man is wont to speak to his friend", St Thomas says: "When Scripture states that He [the Lord] spoke to him [Moses], this is to be understood as expressing the opinion of the people who thought that Moses was speaking with God, mouth to mouth."<sup>5</sup> God has not in fact a mouth; that word, taken literally, would be grossly anthropomorphic. But where, for instance, we come across a clear statement of historical fact, that must not be questioned. To deny that Elkanah was Samuel's father would be contrary to the Catholic Faith, "for it follows that the Divine Scripture would be false".<sup>6</sup>

A couple of generations later, William of Ockham dealt with the same point. He had many reasons for differing from St Thomas, not only as a Franciscan (to whom Dominicans were by that time often rivals and almost enemies), but also because he did not share the standpoint of Aquinas on several important questions. Yet on this question of Biblical inspiration he is, if possible, still more emphatic. He recurs to it over and over again in his *Dialogus*. The Pope himself may not contradict any biblical detail; it would be heresy in a Pope "if, for instance, he were to preach that David was not the son of Jesse, or that Jeroboam had not been King of Israel". In other places he gives similar concrete instances; it would be heretical to deny that Solomon was Bathsheba's son. It was this spirit which made it almost inevitable for the seventeenth-century Roman Congregation, with papal ap-

proval, to condemn Galileo as a man who was guilty of having pushed his scientific speculations to a point which brought them into flat contradiction with Bible certainties. We may see this especially in St Thomas (for it is better still to take him as the crucial example) if we trace two of his most remarkable conclusions back to their source. In one section, after full discussion, he decides definitely that the joy of the Blessed in Heaven will be increased by the sight of the Damned wallowing beneath, in a Hell which he describes (perhaps in virtue of his more voluminous work) at greater length and in cruder terms than Calvin in his *Institutes*. The Blessed will not, of course, rejoice in all these infernal torments *per se*, but incidentally, "considering in them the order of God's justice, and their own liberation, whereat they will rejoice".<sup>7</sup> How can he thus decide, it may be asked, after he himself has pointed out that to rejoice in another's pains may be ordinarily classed as hatred, and that God does not delight in men's pains? Those apparently invincible natural considerations are brushed aside by one plain Bible text: "The just shall rejoice when he shall see the revenge."\* That vindictive verse of a Hebrew poet, to St Thomas, outweighs everything else. So was it with Peter Lombard in his *Sentences*, the first permanently standard book of scholastic philosophy: so is it with Thomas's fellow-Dominican and contemporary, the great encyclopaedist Vincent of Beauvais; so is it with St Bonaventura, in spite of Franciscan humanity; so is it even in early Renaissance times with that other great Franciscan Scholastic and saint, Bernardino of Siena. He, indeed, even outdoes his predecessors and contemporaries, pointing out that all musical harmony needs not only soft but also deep and stern voices, and that God's harmony of heaven could not be complete without these bellowsings of the Damned.<sup>8</sup> Not one of these men was sufficiently shocked by his terrible conclusion to look back critically at his premises, and to realize that the logic which had forced him forward to these horrors reposed upon

\* Ps. lvii. 11: Douay version; in the Vulgate, *laetabitur justus cum viderit vindictam*.

the first fundamental error of bibliolatry, combined with the blind acceptance of an eschatology which owed perhaps almost as much to pagan barbarism as to the Bible.<sup>9</sup>

The Bible, it is true, contains texts which might be cited in support of this eschatology, when once it was ingrained in men's minds. But such extremist interpretations of the Biblical texts were inherited, in a great measure, from militant Judaism and from the natural indignation of Roman Christians against their pagan tormentors. The Eastern Church was more lenient; and Origen, in many ways the greatest of the Greek fathers, actually believed in the final salvation, after such expiation, of all human souls; but that was counted as one of his heresies. Tertullian painted the future vengeance of God upon pagan persecutors in language which still enjoys, after all these centuries, a melancholy notoriety. For more than a thousand years before the Reformation, and even beyond, the strictest and most invidious interpretation was placed upon that famous maxim of St Cyprian: *Extra Ecclesiam nulla Salus*.<sup>10</sup> Since baptism was spoken of in Scripture as necessary for salvation, therefore theologians only allowed rare exceptions: e.g. the "baptism of blood", for martyrs who had not yet been baptized in those days when infant baptism was not yet the rule; or the "baptism of desire" which has not yet been fulfilled in act.<sup>11</sup> In contrast with the Greek Church, Latin theologians put a strictly literal interpretation upon Mark xvi. 16. St Augustine even taught that unbaptized infants suffered in hell not only the penalty of losing the Beatific Vision but bodily torture also. St Thomas and the Schoolmen did indeed modify that, and persuaded themselves that there was a sort of natural happiness in this hell of the unbaptized; but Dante expresses the real mind of the cultured medieval man, as apart from the ignorant multitude who were far less favourable to pagans. There, in the first circle of the Inferno, he hears the "sighs, which caused the eternal air to tremble"; and Virgil tells him how these come from those who "sinned not", but "had not baptism", and therefore are here "in sadness, without torment . . . and of these I



am myself. For such defects, and for no other fault, we are lost; and only in so far afflicted that without hope we live in desire." The very exceptional nature of any escape from that limbo is proved not only by the cautious and ambiguous language in which Scholasticism wrapped up its concessions to human feeling on this subject, but, still more plainly, by the nature of the exceptions quoted. The Patriarchs of the Old Testament are indeed allowed to have been freed from hell at Christ's coming, and all who, believing in a God and Providence, had thus an *implicit* (i.e. implied) faith in Christ. But now, after Christ's coming, something more than this is needed; there must be *explicit* faith in the Incarnation and the Trinity; and the most violent suppositions are adopted to prove that just a few non-Christians may have had such explicit faith. Moreover, there is the almost universally received legend that Trajan was prayed back from hell by St Gregory I, which stands in plain token that the salvation of a heathen here and there was regarded as miraculous. Finally, neglect of baptism, and irregularity in its administration, were treated as a crime destructive of human souls. Here and there a mystic of not unimpeachable orthodoxy, like Rulman Merswin or Langland, might express his belief in the salvation of good Jews and heathen; but Merswin apologizes for this as "a strange speech".<sup>11</sup> The best authority that St Thomas More can quote for such a liberal notion, and this only with the hope that it may possibly be correct, is that of the commentator Nicolas Lyranus [1320]. But in him we have a writer of suspected orthodoxy, partly owing to his knowledge of Hebrew, and partly to the general tone of his work; hence, afterwards, it became proverbial that this man's music had played the tune to Luther's dance: *Si Lyranus non lyrasset, Lutherus non saltasset*. Erasmus was naturally on More's more tolerant side; but that might come from his own independence of mind, or from his study of the Greek Fathers. The only Ecumenical Council of the West which dealt with this question was that of Florence, which decreed: "The Holy Roman Church professes and preaches that none who is not within the Catholic Church (not only pagans, but neither Jews nor

heretics nor schismatics) can partake of eternal life, but shall go into everlasting fire . . . unless they have joined her [*eidem fuerint aggregati*] before death."\*

Such a mental atmosphere almost invariably developed a pessimism scarcely credible to the modern reader. A minority of human beings were "elect": the majority were not indeed "predestined" to hell, but their damnation was "fore-known": God knew that this was their final destination.<sup>12</sup> The difference here between St Thomas Aquinas and Calvin is far smaller than men commonly imagine. There is in the British Museum a rare book by Father F.-X. Godts, a Belgian Redemptorist priest, written to stem that mid-nineteenth-century movement, which is now gaining ground so rapidly, for minimizing the literal significance of Christ's stern pronouncement. Father Godts deplores this leniency as an unjustifiable concession to Protestantism and Latitudinarianism, and insists that it never appeared publicly until 1762, when it was formally condemned at Rome. Meanwhile, at least as far down at St Alfonso Liguori [1750] it had been almost universally taught by writers in the Roman Church that the greater part of mankind would miss salvation.<sup>13</sup> Some even foretold hell for an overwhelming majority; and others, like St Alfonso, held that "the more general opinion is that the greater part even of the Faithful [Roman Catholics] are damned". Aquinas writes: "And in this also doth God's mercy chiefly appear, that He raiseth a few [*aliquos*] to that salvation wherefrom very many [*plurimi*] fail, in accordance with the common course and inclination of nature."<sup>14</sup> Medieval preachers sometimes estimated the disproportion as one in a thousand, or ten thousand, or even more. Thus Father Godts is able to say, after an exhaustive study of the question: "It is vain to seek even a single Saint who has taught that the number of the elect forms a majority." He might have added that, among all the points on which Rome differs from other Christian Churches, there is not one which can claim anything like such unanimous patristic

\* Compare what William of Newburgh says of the Jews at York in Chapter xxix.

authority as can be cited for this doctrine of the *Paucitas Salvandorum*. Indeed, Father Godts shows that it comes very near to a *de fide* doctrine, in virtue of this universal patristic consent until recent times.

When we have realized this, and the further doctrine no less universally taught, that a man's last moments decided for him between an eternity of unimaginable bliss or of unspeakable torment, and that the main decisive factor at those moments was his orthodoxy, and that the last deathbed rites were also of immense importance, we are then in a position to follow another of St Thomas's weightiest arguments: the section in which he proves heresy to be the greatest of all sins, meriting the most pitiless punishment, and calling for vengeance alike from God and from man. Nobody, so far as I know, has ever attempted to break a single link in the logical chain by which the saint thus proves the goodness and the necessity of the Medieval Inquisition. He was a true saint as well as a hero of intellect; he would have endured suffering himself, if need were, rather than inflict useless or undeserved pain upon his fellow-man; but he was chained to his rock of theological tradition. The Bible was the word of Just and Almighty God: the Fathers had interpreted the Bible in that sense; behind those facts it would have been iniquitous to enquire. The late Father Bede Jarrett, an able and candid apologist, wrote in his *Social Theories of the Middle Ages* (p. 36): "Aquinas patiently put away all tradition in philosophy." This is doubtless true if, accepting in its strictest sense the limitation implied in that last word *philosophy*, we understand that he refused to follow blindly even Aristotle, the Prince of Philosophers. If, however, we are to take *philosophy* in its widest sense, as including all the subjects with which Aquinas had to deal in his monumental work, we must see in his attitude towards the Bible a fatal exception to this high praise. In this, however, he was simply the man of his age. Let us take Innocent III, the learned and pious and masterful Pope who set his seal upon the whole thirteenth century. In pressing the claims of the Roman See over its great rival, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, Inno-

cent uses his Bible with the most extravagant licence of allegorical interpretation, on the strength of which he calls upon the Greek Emperor to force the Patriarch into "reverence and obedience to Our Apostolic See".<sup>15</sup> Even more crudely literalistic, perhaps, under its allegorical dress, is Innocent's legal ruling with regard to the translation of bishops from one see to another.<sup>16</sup> The bishop, he argues, is married to his see: therefore "no man may doubt that God Almighty has reserved to His own exclusive judgment the dissolution of that spiritual matrimony. . . . Those whom God hath joined, man shall not separate." Thus (since the Pope is Vicar of Jesus Christ), "it is not so much by Canon Law as by divine institution that [such a separation] is reserved for the Roman Pontiff alone"—that is, to the man who, for centuries now, had taken to himself supreme control over all matrimonial cases. Again and again, in subsequent sentences, the Pope argues from this wild analogy; and the Church accepted his argument with complete subservience. Three centuries more were destined to elapse before Colet, the future Dean of St. Paul's, attracted unusual attention by the unheard-of innovation of lecturing on St Paul's Epistles from the standpoint of a straightforward searcher into the Apostle's actual meaning when he wrote the words we now read in the Bible.

We see here the fundamental weakness of medieval theology, which communicates itself also to those two great handmaids of Theology, Philosophy and Canon Law. Both of these exaggerated that false perspective by which the Bible had long been treated less as a whole than as a collection of separate texts, to be torn from their context and bandied backwards and forwards as missiles in these verbal combats. The whole fabric of Canon Law is vitiated by this ubiquitous flaw. Even if we ignore the episode of the False Decretals, and even though many of its other sources had been purer, and its execution more logical and scientific than in fact it was, yet the very root-conception of medieval Canon Law seems false in the light of history. To base upon the Bible, or even upon the Fathers, a code of legislation enforceable in the

law-courts is contrary to the spirit not only of the Gospels, but even of the Prophets, and of all that is best in the Early Fathers. How capriciously Canon Law dealt even with the Bible is instanced by its deductions from the case of Peter and Malchus's Ear. Here we have an amputation which played as important a part in European politics for at least three centuries before the Reformation, as Jenkins's Ear did for a few months in English politics. A note appended in Gratian's *Decretum* to a text from St Ambrose is there falsely ascribed to St Gregory I, and runs as follows:<sup>17</sup> "Peter cut off Malchus's ear, and Christ restored it unto him. From this we may see that if a man hear not [the Church], his ear must be spiritually smitten off by Peter; for it is Peter who hath the power of binding and loosing." We are far here from Christ's rebuke in the next verse of St Matthew, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword". Yet from this biblical fragment, torn from its context, men argued throughout the rest of the Middle Ages with all the merciless strictness and subtlety of the law-courts. In fourteenth-century England *Piers Plowman* speaks of certain "poor fools" among the friars, who suffered for their loyalty to, or exaggeration of, St Francis's doctrine of poverty. Their uncompromising belief in the complete poverty of Christ and His Apostles had been condemned as heretical by Pope John XXII; many had been imprisoned, and some had even lost their lives in that quarrel. Here, again, bibliolatrous fundamentalism and text-slitting played a prominent part. Men quoted against these extremists of apostolic poverty that word of Christ to Peter, "Put up again *thy* sword into his place". He who had said *I am the Truth*, in that simple monosyllable *thy*, proved beyond all question that at least *one* apostle had possessed at least *one* thing of his own, thus destroying the contention that He and His apostles lived by utter renunciation of private property! It may safely be said that no field-preacher of modern times has ever outdone the greatest of medieval scholars in this licence of interpretation from isolated texts.

The fact that Innocent and Aquinas were here following the tradition of their day, in proportion as it excuses them personally, reinforces out judgment upon the tradition itself and the age which implicitly accepted it. The most dangerous of errors are those which have the longest pedigree and attract the noblest souls. Roger Bacon complained that the Bible was being displaced in universities by the Sentences; by that compilation in which Peter Lombard detached a number of texts from Scripture and the Fathers, and strove to weave them into a coherent synthesis. Though Bacon's words here contain a demonstrable exaggeration, yet it is certain that the great Schoolmen such as Aquinas and Bonaventura devoted some of their most laborious work to commenting upon the Sentences; and in medieval college catalogues there are far more copies of that volume than of the Bible. If this was so even amongst the most learned, it was incomparably worse among the multitude who knew no Latin, and to whom (as will be seen in Chapter XLIX) vernacular translations were almost altogether forbidden for their souls' health. The mystic Margery Kempe [1420] tells us how, when she supported her objections to oaths by reference to Christ's own words, the clergy cried out to the Archbishop of Canterbury who sat in judgment upon her: "Ah, sir, here we wot well that she hath a devil within her, for she speaketh of the Gospel!" (p. 189). Medieval theology thus moved in a vicious circle. In all other matters than this, the superior certainty of ink and parchment over oral tradition was almost or quite as notorious as it is to-day. As one monastic cartulary puts it, "man is a forgetful beast"—*homo est obliuiosum animal*—unless things be written down in ink.\* Yet here, in theology, while on the one hand any particular Bible text might be insisted upon with the most ferocious literalness, on the other, there was scarcely any limit to the licence of interpretation, or even to the studied oblivion, of any passage which might clash inconveniently with a steadily stiffening

\* I give a few examples, out of many, in *Five Centuries of Religion*, vol. III, pp. 45ff.

dogmatic tradition. This was the natural result of the hierarchical caste-system, sheltered from free outside criticism. When, therefore, Europe began to be educated enough for the layman to interest himself in somewhat more than the barest rudiments of his creed, then violent differences of opinion inevitably grew up between the "specialist" and the "amateur". The specialist was powerful enough to suppress criticism until this rift had widened into a gulf; and then came the great revolt which will be dealt with in my final chapters.

This is a consideration which is too often neglected in the present-day rehabilitation of scholastic thought; viz. the reaction of layfolk from the unjust neglect or misrepresentations of the past. We must face both sides equally frankly. The more we admire the intellectual and moral greatness of those Scholastics, and the greater gratitude we feel for their achievements in many directions, the more deeply we must deplore those now abandoned falsehoods which, dominating their age, naturally fettered their thought. Nor is there anything Pharisaical in this outspoken condemnation, so long as we remember the exhortation "Physician, heal thyself". The specialist in every age (not excepting the scientist of to-day, who here has least excuse of all) is tempted to create, or accept on insufficient evidence, dogmas of his own. In every age, the supreme achievement is a Socratic realization of our precise intellectual limitations. Therefore, if there exists in modern Europe a mind of the calibre of Aquinas, it must be even more deplorable that he should be infected as Aquinas was by the fatal illusions of this, his own century. Stubbs, one of the weightiest and most balanced among all our great English historians, summarizes the Scholastics in words which would probably commend themselves to the majority of impartial historians. "They benefited mankind by exercising and training subtle wits, and they reduced dialectics, almost, we might say, logic itself, to absurdity. I do not undervalue them, because the great men among them were so great that even such a method did not destroy them: in reading St

Thomas Aquinas, for instance, one is constantly provoked to say, what could not such a mind have done if it had not been fettered by such a method?"<sup>18</sup> By their application of reason to theology, they carried the West far beyond its earlier semi-barbarian stage of still more uncritical citation of authorities and frankly emotional exposition. In combination with the lawyers, who were pursuing parallel methods in their own sphere, these Schoolmen laid the foundations of modern political science. Thus they added definitely to our social inheritance: the West was thenceforward on a higher plane.

Moreover, within their limitations the Schoolmen often showed amazing industry and acumen. Aquinas, in especial, commands hearty admiration even from modern philosophers who are least disposed to accept many of his most important conclusions. They commend him for the almost incredible volume of work which he completed in a comparatively short life, and for his penetration and philosophical grasp. He, like by far the greater number of distinguished Schoolmen, was a friar. In this field England may boast extraordinary distinction. A Swiss Franciscan scholar writes: "The English nation has given to the Franciscan Order a greater number of eminent scholars than all the rest of the nations put together. Indeed, if we consider the real leaders of the Minorite schools, they all belonged, with the exception of Bonaventura, to England."<sup>19</sup> No other country can produce such a Franciscan trio as Roger Bacon (d. 1294), Duns Scotus (d. 1308) and William of Ockham (d. 1349). Duns, it is true, was born in Lowland Scotland; but he taught at Oxford, and the culture of Lowland Scotland was then as characteristically English as that of modern Belgium is French, or that of Austria German. And Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, though not a friar, set an impress upon the Franciscans at Oxford which brought that University to the front rank in Europe.

We cannot choose a better concrete example of St Thomas's method than the section of his *Summa theologica* in which he justifies the Inquisition system (2a 2ae Quaest. xi). Article 1 discusses whether heresy is a species of infidelity:



conclusion, *Yes*. Art. 2: Is it specially concerned with matters of faith? *Yes* again. Art. 3: Are heretics to be tolerated? *No*. Art. 4: Should those who return from heresy be received by the Church? *Yes*, always received *to penitence*, however often they may have relapsed; but it would be wrong "so to receive them always, that they might keep their lives and their other temporal goods". And, since this Article 3 is the most important, we may take it in detail, in its four formal divisions:

A. *Evidence for toleration*. (1) 2 Tim. ii. 23-4. (2) That which is necessary must be tolerated; and heresy must needs exist (1 Cor. xi. 19: "For there must be also heresies"). (3) The Lord bade His servants wait till after the harvest before dealing with the tares: i.e. to the end of this world (Matt. xiii. 25ff.).

B. *Contrary evidence*. Titus iii. 10. "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition avoid, knowing that he that is such an one is subverted."\*

C. *St Thomas's Conclusion*. Let us distinguish between what is right (*a*) for the heretic, or (*b*) the Church. The heretic, who corrupts men's souls, is far more guilty than the coiner who corrupts money, and thus far more worthy of death. Therefore, if he be found pertinacious, the Church justly "leaves him to the secular judgment to be banished from the world by death".

D. *Removal of Objections rehearsed in (A)*. (1) This requirement of Timothy is satisfied by the Church in that she does "modestly admonish them that resist the truth", and gives them a chance of recantation. (2) The utility which comes from heretics is not in their intention, which is to corrupt the Faith. Therefore "we must look rather to their essential intention, and so exclude them, than to that which is apart from their intention, and so bear with them". (3)

\*The Vulgate here has "*haereticum hominem . . . devita*". Erasmus, at the end of his *Praise of Folly*, quotes a priest who, at a theological discussion in his own presence, and with approval on the part of some others, defended the burning of heretics by quoting St Paul's command *haereticum hominem devita*, under the impression that *devitare* meant "deprive of life".

This command of the Lord applies only to cases where the tares cannot be uprooted without uprooting the wheat.†

This illustrates the thoroughness of the method which St Thomas follows throughout all this gigantic work. First, we shall find him always speaking as advocate for what seems the weaker side, alleging all that can be cited for that. Then, he marshals similar evidence on the other side, often in many paragraphs, but often, as here, in the shape of a single Bible text. Then, leaving advocacy on either side, he puts on the judge's cap, weighs the evidence, and pronounces sentence. But, finally, he will not leave the court until he has done his best to explain away everything that had been pleaded on behalf of the mistaken side. The only weakness of this method, it must be repeated, is one which is inherent in the mentality of that age, and which differentiates Scholasticism clearly from both Graeco-Roman and modern philosophy.\* Scholasticism worked only within certain definite traditional limits; often wider than we might imagine, but often, again, barbarously narrow. We may use that word *barbarous* advisedly: because, even where the decisive factor may be (as in this case) a single Bible text, that text must needs be interpreted according to traditions which, though finally dignified by the claim of ecclesiastical inerrancy, can often be traced to their source among the ignorant multitude, during the break-up of Graeco-Roman civilization. Aquinas would have been burned if he had denied certain things which, by now, his Church has outgrown. Moreover, even Aristotle's authority was almost sacrosanct: in the nature of the case, medieval

† This explanation he has taken from St Augustine, who, having for some time taken the side of toleration, confessed himself finally convinced by the practical success of physical punishment against heretics. (Quaest. x, art. viii.)

\* It is true that there has often been over-emphasis on authority both in ancient and in modern times, and that Protestant bibliolatry and eschatology have often remained frankly medieval. Again, both pagans and Protestants have forcibly suppressed freedom of thought: but never so systematically and successfully as the medieval Church, in whose doctrines intolerance is implicit. The existence of what may be called pre-medieval and post-medieval medievalism does not destroy the distinctive character of medieval thought as a whole.

thinkers paid enormous respect to classical authorities. Thus the teaching had nearly always begun in the form of commentary upon some consecrated textbook, of which the teacher alone possessed a copy; and, to the very last, it bore the imprint of these origins.

Yet the lecture gradually evolved into something much more like that of modern times. Finally, we find a definite regulation at Paris that the lecturer must go "as though he were preaching a University sermon", or in other words, "as though no man were writing before him"; yet in 1355 it was found necessary to legislate against the abuse of dictating slowly word by word—in other words, of "cramming". The lecturer who did this was to be suspended for a year; "and all students who impede the execution of this our present statute by shouting, stamping, stone-throwing or any other device—whether by themselves or through the agency of their servants or abettors—are hereby cut off from our fellowship for one whole year."<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the worst weakness was the imperfect command of Latin, although all teaching was done or was supposed to be done in that language. At Oxford, for instance, 5 of the 65 Halls were devoted to the teaching of grammar; that is, to bringing undergraduates to the stage at which it was possible for them to follow the lectures at all. At Cambridge, similarly, the Master of Grammar (*Magister Glomeriae*, as he was called by a significant corruption) became a definite university institution. At the Colleges it was ruled that all conversations should be held in Latin. Sometimes there was a special scholar appointed (on the Continent his common nickname was *lupus* or "wolf") who earned his emoluments on condition of reporting infractions of this Latin rule on the part of his fellow-scholars. Far too little stress is commonly laid upon the immense gulf between those philosophers whose works have come down to us, and the ordinary scholar who sat under them in the lecture room. Again, we can scarcely exaggerate the cultural importance of the conversations of scholars with one another, on their walks or by the evening fire. Underneath the conventionalities of official university

teaching we get constant indications of smouldering volcanoes; masters condemned for pantheistical or atheistical tenets. For instance, one Nicolas de Ultricuria was condemned in mid-fourteenth century for a series of propositions derived from Averroës and anticipating most of the sceptical tenets of Berkeley and Hume; and again we have revolutionary political writers like Pierre Dubois, Marsilius of Padua, William of Ockham, whose anti-papal lucubrations must have been fashioned originally in private converse, probably not exclusively in their own generation, but by a succession of scholars passing the torch on from generation to generation. This lends much of its significance to the startling novelties of More's *Utopia*; a book which, after all attempts to discount its serious purpose, certainly indicates extreme freedom of discussion under the surface in the group with which More was familiar, and probably also in other groups at Oxford, Cambridge, and the Inns of Court. Yet here again, in so far as the students were faithful to the Latin-speaking tradition, this must have hampered them considerably. So long as Latin had been a living language among the people, it had been a great advantage to have the Bible and the Liturgy in that language; but in proportion as it died out among the multitude this original prop became gradually a shackle. We often find that even learned men fell back upon the vernacular for their most intimate prayers and speeches; and it may be doubted whether, at any time in the Middle Ages, half a dozen men ever met together with sufficient mastery over Latin to enable each speaker to express his inmost thought as correctly and coherently, and each hearer to pick it up with the same certainty, as that with which men now express themselves and understand each other in their own vernacular. In medieval philosophy there were no "national" schools of thought, in the sense in which that may be predicated of modern philosophy. Yet this internationalism was gained to a great extent by a lowering of the general level; the steam-roller of Latin reduced a large number of natural inequalities; and that, together with the hampering theological restrictions, goes a long way to account for the comparative unprogressive-

ness of thought from the thirteenth to the end of the fifteenth century.

There remains one most important point, that of book-production at the Universities. Every good College had a certain number of books chained for general use, and often another set for circulation on loan. Full details on this subject are given in Professor F. M. Powicke's admirable monograph on the medieval library of Merton College, Oxford; and, quite recently, an epoch-making study has been published by Dr Jean Destrez, under the title of *La Pecia*, with a fine illustrative album of facsimiles from medieval university manuscripts. Dr Destrez just alludes to the evolution of the monastic scriptorium; but that is not his primary concern. By the end of the thirteenth century, at even great and specially cultured abbeys like St Albans, the main work in the scriptorium was evidently being done by hired workmen; and monastic libraries grew very slowly even with that assistance and by the gifts of wealthy benefactors. But, almost at the same time as the monks were beginning to content themselves with marking time, these new Universities were in the fervour and energy of youth. They, from the very first, were led forward by necessity to enormous advances in the matter of book-multiplication. The monk, whose rule and custom supposed him ordinarily to read only one volume a year, was satisfied with that very slow rate of increase which we find in fact wherever two successive catalogues from the same abbey give us clear evidence. The university student, on the other hand, might well read more pages in a year than the average Religious read in his whole lifetime. St Benedict had never envisaged his brethren as students in anything like that sense; therefore these new Universities created a revolutionary demand.

*Pecia*, piece, was probably a trade term with the tanners and parchment-makers; it was a skin, trimmed to the largest parallelogram that it will afford. Thus trimmed, it was folded and counter-folded, and formed eight pages of a size which we should call large quarto. Very exceptionally, the *pecia* consisted of a larger gathering than this; but, on the whole,

the term signified a definite standard unit, created by the business needs of the first two great medieval Universities, Bologna and Paris. At Bologna, every year, a committee of *peciarii* was chosen from among the masters. The *stationarii* were bound, under oath, to produce all the *exemplaria* which they possessed. Dr Destrez writes: "If the majority of *peciae* in any *exemplar*, or at least 6 of them, seem insufficiently correct, the committee corrects them at the expense of the *stationarius*, who must pay the cost on the spot. For this purpose every master or student of the University is bound, when required, to lend his own book if it is judged to be good. And if the doctor or student, after it has been judged sufficient, refuse to lend it at least within his own house, let him be definitely mulcted of 5 pounds, to be applied to the good of our University"—a significant contradiction of all modern ideas of copyright. The committee then publishes its official list of *exemplaria*: all others are forbidden as false and useless. Each *exemplar* is marked with the number of *peciae* which it contains, and with the price per *pecia* due to the *stationarius* from the borrower. The *stationarius* is upon oath to lend them at that price to all comers, and to put none into circulation which has not been examined and authorized. He must submit them to inspection at the committee's demand; and he must put up a public and conspicuous list, with prices, of his own *exemplaria*. With equal publicity he must post a list of those copyists or illuminators who have been discomfited by the University as unsatisfactory. Finally, seeing that the borrower ordinarily left a pledge instead of paying beforehand, the lender must keep a list of such pledges, safeguard them, and restore them directly the *pecia* comes back. Elaborate precautions are taken; for these "scholars" are keen business men, at least as mature in age as modern Rhodes scholars or research students; indeed, in many cases they are beneficed clergy, undertaking this elaborate and expensive education in order to qualify for archdeaconries or similar posts of honour and profit. It is they who draw up these statutes for the government of their University. Their professors or doctors—the two terms were synonymous—are

the hired servants of the scholars, bound by the same network of oaths and prohibitions as the bedels or the university tradesmen. The *stationarius*, when recognized and licensed, must "give sufficient security for 2000 pounds, at least, that he will keep faithfully and restore unhurt the books and other possessions which the scholars have entrusted to him." For, not only did a scholar leave a pledge if he borrowed a *pecia* to copy, but all public sales of books, as apart from private purchase or exchange between scholar and scholar, went through the hands of these *stationarii*, who were sworn on oath to keep clear-priced catalogues, with name of the owner who is selling the volume. A *stationarius* needed, therefore, to be a capitalist; we know that the sixty-three volumes left by the great Accursius (1261) fetched 500 pounds of that day, though they were sold within the family and probably far below auction price. Scholars were forbidden to speculate; if the bookseller knowingly sold to any man who meant to sell again, he was fined five pounds, one of which went to the informer. Similar restrictions were imposed upon all "merchants" who were rich enough to deal in second-hand books.

It was within this network of minute regulations that the professional copyists, illuminators, correctors, and binders worked. The *stationarius* was bound to keep pure and legible texts: he must lend out the books or the *peciae* at a tariff fixed by the University. As the cost of living went up from generation to generation, there was a temptation to diminish the size of the *pecia*: but this could not long go on undiscovered; for the same committee which had fixed the original tariff recorded also the number of *peciae* in each *exemplar*. One of the most interesting points established by the diligence and *flair* of Dr Destrez is this, that where we find two or more varying exemplars of the same book, it is always the oldest which contains the fewest *peciae*. Thus the question of the standard *pecia* became finally a matter for special legislation. In 1486 the University of Padua decreed that it should contain 16 columns, each of 60 lines and 32 letters to the line. Dr Destrez shows us how we may follow the scribe at work. The copyist, arrived at the end of his *pecia*, finds his

pen grown blunt; he recuts it or takes a new quill; and the result is obvious at once. Or, again, his ink has grown too thick, or contrariwise he thinks it too pale, and here again the change leaves its mark. By dint of indefatigable attention, Dr Destrez has found nearly thirty *exemplaria*, i.e. the actual MSS. which Bolognese or Parisian authorities licensed as correct, and which their *stationarii* hired out as copies. In some cases these show natural signs of wear and tear, or even of folding by the copyists who found it convenient to carry them upon their person. His account of the gradual deterioration and replacement of worn *peciae* is of special interest, and must go far to revolutionize the textual study of MSS. from university centres.

This advance of book-production, so far beyond anything attempted during the previous eight centuries of monastic writing, must be put definitely to the credit of the medieval universities. So also must we give them all credit for their sharpening of the tools of thought. Those generations which struggled for a working synthesis of the unerrant Bible and the almost unerrant Aristotle did not only quicken men's curiosity to a very high degree, but fashioned instruments for further thought; many of our commonest abstract terms were either fashioned altogether or first popularized by these Schoolmen. When we hear from the lips of an ordinary labourer such a sentence as "it ain't the *quantity* of the food I object to, but the *quality*", that man is drawing a necessary distinction more easily and familiarly than many educated Romans could have done in Cicero's day. Yet while all this mental exercise taught men much; it ingrained also in their minds many things from which the world, both orthodox and unorthodox, has freed itself very slowly and painfully.

Those modern writers who, in violent reaction against past injustices, bid us return to the keen intellectuality of the Schoolmen, are too apt to forget their statue's feet of clay. Immense labour and intellectual enthusiasm were often spent as vainly as the Royal Society is said to have spent itself in long and intricate discussion of Charles II's malicious question: "Why does a living fish weigh more than a dead



one?" The king (we are told) listened with secret amusement, and then enquired whether any one of the disputants had begun by verifying the assumed fact. Dogmatic assumptions as to heaven and hell, expanded by relentless and impeccable logic, led Peter Lombard, St Thomas, St Bonaventura, and St Bernardino, to their terrible picture of blessed souls looking happily down through all eternity upon the unspeakable torments of the damned. The dogma of Ecclesiastical Infallibility, pursued with that remorseless logic which, on one side, was the Schoolman's strength, led inevitably to the slaughter of thousands who were held to have forfeited human rights by attempting, after their own clumsy fashion, to be more Christian than the Pope and his cardinals. Moreover, the intellectual alertness of the early university age (say, from 1180 to 1280) had degenerated, long before the end of our period, into wearisome logomachy and hair-splitting. Erasmus, in a letter to Cardinal Campeggio, pleaded that Luther, however mistaken, should not be condemned unheard. He pointed out that the most respectable men seemed to favour Luther, and that this rough innovator's success came from the fact that "the world, as sick of this doctrine [of the Schoolmen], which laid too much stress upon petty comments or decrees of man, seemed to thirst for that living and most pure water drawn from Evangelical or Apostolic sources".<sup>21</sup> We may take an illustration on a coarser scale, but to that extent clearer. All reasonable folk are grateful for the patience, enthusiasm, and untiring experiments of the alchemists; yet nobody contends that this imposes upon us any duty of accepting their conclusions. I cannot end better than by quoting Rashdall's sane and balanced summary. After pointing out that medieval education was "at once too dogmatic and too disputatious", he sums up:<sup>22</sup> "The rapid multiplication of Universities during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was largely due to a direct demand for highly educated lawyers and administrators. In a sense the academic discipline of the Middle Ages was too practical. It trained pure intellect, encouraged habits of laborious subtlety, heroic industry, and intense application,

while it left uncultivated the imagination, the taste, the sense of beauty—in a word, all the amenities and refinements of the civilized intellect. It taught men to think and to work rather than to enjoy. Most of what we understand by 'culture', much of what Aristotle understood by the 'noble use of leisure', was unappreciated by the medieval intellect. On the speculative side the Universities were (as has been said) 'the school of the modern spirit': they taught men to reason and to speculate, to doubt and to inquire, to find a pleasure in the things of the intellect both for their own sake and for the sake of their applications to life. They dispelled for ever the obscurantism of the Dark Ages. From a practical point of view their greatest service to mankind was simply this, that they placed the administration of human affairs—in short, the government of the world—in the hands of educated men. The actual rulers—the Kings or the aristocrats—might often be as uneducated or more uneducated than modern democracies, but they had to rule through the instrumentality of a highly educated class."

This chapter must not end without a repeated warning against exaggeration of the distinctiveness of medieval theologico-philosophic thought. Some of its characteristics can be found in pagan philosophy; and the same, or others, were often prominent for long after the Reformation. Its lurid eschatology, for instance, and the Bible "fundamentalism" on which that eschatology was so largely based, were strong in some religious quarters until yesterday. Yet, on the whole, it did differ clearly from both ancient and modern thought; if only in this, that neither of those other two was able to drill men into that same uniformity, at the risk of their very lives, which can be predicated of all medieval thought in its main outlines, apart from permissible minor variations.

### 33. SCIENCE

Throughout this chapter, I am glad to acknowledge a heavy debt to the works of Dr Charles Singer, whose volume on *Religion and Science* in Benn's Sixpenny Library should be read by all who are interested in this subject; they will then probably wish to pass on to his larger works.

The decay of science cannot be directly credited to the rise of Christianity; Greek and Roman science had been in full decay before Constantine's recognition of this as the favoured religion of the Empire.<sup>1</sup> In those days, at any rate, Christianity came as a healthy protest against the pessimistic materialism which coloured so much of ancient thought; it objected not to actual observation and experiment (for those were no longer living forces in the Empire), but to the philosophical generalizations of paganism. For a living science two factors are essential: observation and synthesis. Observation must be patient and open-minded; synthesis must be bold and imaginative; each, sincerely used, stimulates, corrects, and supplements the other. This combination, in the Middle Ages, was nearly always imperfect. There was so little penetrating first-hand observation, in proportion to the collection and preservation of past traditions, that Dr Singer can write, without more injustice than is inherent in a single brief and epigrammatic sentence, "Medieval medicine may be summed up as a corrupted version of Galenism." In other words, medical science stood still—or even, to some extent, went backwards, from A.D. 200 to nearly 1500. Moreover, even when we do find traces of patient original observation, this is scarcely ever turned to its proper account by bold philosophic synthesis. Roger Bacon and Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa are perhaps the only two who can be specified, within a whole thousand years of Western Europe, who combined both the essentials, original observation and bold synthesis. Dr J. J.

Walsh, in his *Medieval Medicine*, misses here, as on nearly every page of that book, the real root of the matter. He writes concerning Albert the Great, earliest of the great Dominican philosophers and teacher of St Thomas Aquinas: "In Albert's tenth book of his 'Summa', in which he catalogues and describes all the trees, plants, and herbs known in his time, he declares: 'All that is here set down is the result of our own experience, or has been borrowed from authors whom we know to have written what their personal experience has confirmed; for in these matters experience alone can be of certainty.' In his impressive Latin phrase, 'experimentum solum certificat in talibus'."<sup>2</sup> The words which I have here italicized are crucial: Albert frankly confesses to taking much of this "experience" from books, which we know now to be frequently most inaccurate. Even the greatest of medieval Schoolmen constantly based themselves on respectable hearsay, partly from classical writers and partly from popular traditions of hoary antiquity. Thus even St Thomas Aquinas himself, in that *Summa contra Gentiles* which is often regarded as his greatest philosophical (as apart from theological) performance, argues with equal confidence from the occult property of the magnet to draw iron, and the equally mysterious force of a certain *remora*, a mythical fish of a foot or eighteen inches, which has power to retard, or even hold up completely, the greatest ships. In the vast mass of Albert's writings, there are comparatively few original observations, though his was a mind of exceptional curiosity. The most that Dr Singer can say for him is that he "was among the few Medieval writers who were real observers of nature. . . . As an independent observer he is not altogether contemptible." Indeed, it was one of Roger Bacon's most serious criticisms upon the philosophy of both Albert and Aquinas, that it paid so little attention either to mathematics or to physical science. In contrast with these, Bacon praises a few laborious philological and philosophical students of his own time, whose self-effacing originality kept them from popularity, and whose influence on the general current of medieval thought was almost negligible. As Dr Walsh himself notes,

Bacon testifies concerning one of these, Peter by name, a researcher into magnetism, "I know of only one person who deserves praise for his work in experimental philosophy, for he does not care for the discourses of men and their wordy warfare, but quietly and diligently pursues the works of wisdom. Therefore, what others grope after blindly, as bats in the evening twilight, this man contemplates in their brilliancy, *because he is a master of experiment.*" Bacon himself did indeed pay not only lip-homage to experiment, but spent a large fortune upon it and did his best to form a school of experimentalists. As Dr Singer says, he "frequently uses the phrase *experimental science*, which is for him the sole means of obtaining knowledge. 'All sciences except this,' he writes, 'either merely employ arguments to prove conclusions, like the purely speculative sciences, or have universal and imperfect conclusions. Experimental science alone can ascertain to perfection what can be effected by Nature, what by art, what by fraud. It alone teaches how to judge all the follies of the magicians, just as logic tests argument.'" Cusa, again, ranks as a real scientific investigator: "for he clearly perceived the nature and some of the possibilities of the experimental method and did not hesitate to draw general laws from his conclusions." But Bacon spent a considerable portion of his life in confinement, and his writings were so far suppressed that nothing of them found its way into print until 1733. Cusanus, again, though a cardinal, was led by his own constructive scientific efforts into speculations which orthodox modern critics find it difficult to separate from pantheism; indeed Giordano Bruno, who was burned for pantheism in 1600, publicly acknowledged his intellectual debt to "il divino Cusano".

Astronomy was one of the few subjects to which the Middle Ages did contribute original observation of detail; but, when at last it had outgrown its chrysalis-stage of astrology, and when genius added synthesis to mere observation of detail and cataloguing, then Europe saw the tragedy which culminated in Galileo's condemnation and imprisonment. Moreover, this hostility to impartial observation may be

noted, even to the present day, in the orthodox historiography of the Roman Church. It is implicit in the principle which is so clearly stated by that Pope who wrote classical Latin of real refinement, and who first opened the Vatican Library to the reading public. Leo XIII, in his pastoral letter to the French clergy on the study of history, wrote in 1899: "Those who study it must never lose sight of the fact that it contains a collection [*un ensemble*] of dogmatic facts, which impose themselves upon our faith, and which nobody is ever permitted to call in doubt." With that, Albert the Great would have been in complete sympathy; and he would have found a far more impressive phrase in the time-honoured Latin of "extra Ecclesiam nulla salus". The result has been that, throughout the centuries until the present day, and more especially since the foundation of the Institut Catholique at Paris, we have abundant orthodox monographs, often full and accurate in detail, on separate subjects, but these are seldom frankly synthetic even within their own limits. To correct anticlerical misstatements and exaggerations is sometimes easy; again, it is seldom dangerous to confess facts damaging to orthodoxy in detail here and there; but the real crux comes when a thinker passes onward to draw from such mere details what might seem the natural inferences. There, the adventurous historian may only too easily find himself faced by that ring of dogmatic facts which stands like the wall of flame round Paradise: thus far shalt thou go, and no farther! The clearest example here is that of Monsignor Louis Duchesne, whose knowledge of historical detail was perhaps widest and most exact among all these scholars, and whose earlier monographs are still classical. When, towards the end of his life, he set himself to write no longer mere separate essays, but a complete history which should range over the whole field, and in which none of the time-honoured thorny problems could be quietly ignored, then this *Histoire Ancienne de l'Église*, which bade fair to become classical not only throughout the world but even within his own Church, was put upon the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*.

Thus, though a few new inventions, or reintroductions of

old things, stand to the credit of the Middle Ages, these bore little fruit. Lenses, which had been known to the Arabians, were adapted to spectacles in about 1300; and the mariner's compass had been adopted perhaps two centuries earlier. But these led to no discovery of general laws either in the theory of light or in magnetism. Therefore, as Dr Singer points out, there was as yet no conflict between the medieval scientist and the Inquisition: "experimental methods produced no conclusions dangerous to current theology; and, on the other hand, no officer of the Inquisition ever grasped the nature of the scientific method."

Yet that conflict was only a question of time, since Inquisition and Science were essentially inspired by mutually exclusive principles. Modern attempts to represent the Galileo case as a misunderstanding, or a mere unlucky accident, fly in the face of the plainest documentary evidence. It was not that Galileo blundered by stepping outside his own domain of science and attacking Holy Scripture. On the contrary, it was the Roman Church which, relying upon its own authority to interpret the Bible in a sense defended by nobody nowadays, stepped outside its own domain and would have burned the man of science if he had not allowed himself to be silenced in his own scientific field. For it was the Church itself, officially and solemnly, which pronounced that condemnation; the fact is confessed, and proved against the special pleading of modern apologists, by Abbé Vacandard, one of the ablest of Roman Catholic historians. Indeed one of those same apologists, Abbé Choupin, is constrained to admit that "it was certainly in the name of the Pope, and therefore of the Teaching Church, that the judgments of 1616 and 1633 [against Galileo] were pronounced".<sup>a</sup> The fact is, that the Galileo tragedy was implicit in the whole teaching and practice of the medieval Church, which was still unchanged in the seventeenth century. For a thousand years past, every factor had been there except one. There had been no astronomer of Galileo's genius. With him, at last, came the man great enough in astronomy to dash his head against those narrow and unyielding ecclesiastical limitations. Roger Bacon, for

his part, seems never to have come into actual conflict with the Inquisition itself, but (almost as dangerous) with the conservatives of his own Franciscan order. A liberal Pope (Clement IV) heard of this remarkable man, and wrote in 1266 bidding Bacon send him a fair copy of his books secretly and without delay, notwithstanding any constitution of the Franciscan order to the contrary: for friars, like monks, were forbidden to publish their writings without authority. For a brief while he enjoyed that papal favour, and produced the most remarkable of his writings in an extraordinarily short space; but in 1277 the shadow fell again upon him. This time (to quote the words of the medieval Franciscan chronicler), the Minister General, "by the advice of many friars, condemned and reprobated the teaching of Friar Roger Bacon of England, master of sacred theology, as containing some unsuspected novelties, on account of which the same Roger was condemned to prison". Upon this Dr A. G. Little comments: "The teaching and the novelties are not defined by the chronicler, but we may infer that the causes of Bacon's imprisonment were his contempt for authority, his attacks on the Dominicans and on his own Order, his defence and practice of the 'magical sciences', in magic being included the unknown powers of art and nature." For, on those points of "magic", Bacon insisted upon scientific observation, just as the Society for Psychical Research does in our own day. To quote again from Dr Little: Bacon insisted that "the whole question of the 'magical sciences' should be investigated by competent men specially licensed by the pope. . . . As to the books of necromancy, says the writer, it would be better to keep them than to destroy them. Many of the books condemned contain nothing against the Catholic faith; 'nor is it perhaps just that people who have never touched them should presume to judge them'. It was an open repudiation of ecclesiastical authority." We need not wonder that his writings afford us glimpses of other patient researchers of that day, who for us are mute and inglorious. No doubt he did not always practise what he preached; but Professor A. E. Taylor felicitously summarizes his place in this field:



Bacon is the man "to whom we probably owe it that the ideal of a mathematical physics was kept alive to bear fruit in a later age".<sup>4</sup>

Another struggle in which he rose far above all contemporaries—the insistence on scientific revision of the Vulgate Bible text, which by that time swarmed with errors—did indeed involve him in no serious conflict; but only, perhaps, because the whole matter remained fruitless for long after his death. No Pope undertook the task until after the Reformation; and even then, the text thus produced was inferior to those produced under Bacon's system: it is not until our own day that a formal papal commission has at last grappled with and satisfied that crying need in theological science. For historical science Bacon did nothing: indeed, his belief that the morality of pagan Rome was such as to put that of his own age to shame is in flat contradiction to notorious facts. There was still so much in him of the typical Schoolman that, if he had stepped into that field, he would probably have fallen under Stubbs's criticism, that the thirteenth-century mind suffered from "the attempt to substitute abstract reasonings for minute examination of facts in the study of history". But, at his worst, he would have been incapable of those historical aberrations which constantly meet us in the *Lives of the Saints*, and which aroused the disgust of the most orthodox Bishop Melchior Cano in the sixteenth century.\* Nor would he have connived at what was only too common, the deliberate substitution of revelation for historical observation and records. Somewhere about A.D. 850 Agnellus, Bishop of Ravenna, undertook to write a complete series of lives of his predecessors in that see. He was, for his own time, a remarkable scholar: yet here is his description of his historical methods. "Where I have not found any history of any of these bishops,

\* "Many on our side are either slaves to partiality, or even deliberately invent so much, that I am not only ashamed but disgusted by them." They "have destroyed men's faith in truth for the sake of this faith in falsehood". "Suetonius alone has kept all [the notes of a true historian], and most of our historians have abandoned them all." (*Loci Theologici*, Bk XI, c. 6, written fifteen years after St Thomas More's death.)

and have not been able by conversation with aged men, or inspection of the monuments, or from any other authentic source, to obtain information concerning them, in such a case, in order that there might not be a break in the series, I have composed the life myself, with the help of God and the prayers of the brethren." In another place, again: "On account of your prayer, and that my history [of St Aurelian] may not be too short, I will, with divine help, relate boldly what my human intellect is quite unable to declare." We have a similar instance from Flanders. The whole early history of the cathedral and city of Tournai rests upon revelations made in successive visions by a departed saint to a twelfth-century canon, at whose dictation they were incorporated in the official chronicle of the cathedral. Men learned thus that Tournai had been founded by Tarquinius Priscus, who was contemporary with Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel at Babylon. The saint's visions were communicated to St Bernard at the famous Council of Sens; and the chronicler gives no hint of disapproval on the part of that great soul and great intellect. As against this, there were many medieval chroniclers who took real pains to ascertain their facts, and a few who show true historical sense: in England, William of Newburgh and Matthew Paris may be specially mentioned under that head. But there was nothing like historical science; nothing like the modern care for documents, and bee-like passage from flower to flower with steady persistence of collection. What the monks sometimes did within their own abbeys was much rarer than is commonly supposed; and, even at the greatest abbeys, when a chronicler does at last appear he often has to confess the scarcity of documents bequeathed to him by generations or centuries of predeceased brethren. Even then, again, the medieval stress upon impulse as opposed to patient reflection, and the low estimate of labour which was characteristic of that rudimentary civilization, told against science in history as in other fields.

If there was so little system in the record or study of past events, still less was there in scientific zoology, botany and geography. For these subjects our ancestors were mainly de-

pendent upon such ancient classics as Pliny and Solinus. These authors were accepted almost without criticism with their descriptions of "anthropophagi, whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders", and similar fables which survived to some extent far beyond the Renaissance and Reformation. It is true that the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries did produce real travellers whose stories, however strange, are mainly true and valuable; missionary friars like Piano-Carpini, Odoric, Rubruquis; Marco Polo the merchant; and Boldenseele the German knight. These, and many more, form a *corpus* of extreme value for the modern geographer and ethnographer; but, during the whole Middle Ages, no student attempted to submit them to scientific analysis and synthesis. Vincent of Beauvais, that thirteenth-century encyclopaedist whose three enormous folios, together with a fourth by some other Dominican, formed the standard encyclopaedia for all the remainder of our period, gives simply undigested morsels in this field; just as (to Cano's disgust) he does in history. Moreover, the general stress upon authority and discouragement of independent criticism, with the difficulty of balancing *pros* and *cons* upon any subject in an age which was far more bookless than it has been fashionable to assume during the last few modern generations, gave an enormous encouragement to unconscientiously picturesque, or even deliberately false, compilations. Here the stock example is a probable Englishman, Sir John Maundeville. He describes himself as a Knight of St Albans; and the evidence seems strong for some real connection of some such man with St Albans. Yet no such name can be clearly identified in other records; and it seems pretty certain that the book was first written in French at Liège, then translated into Latin, and last into English. Its popularity was almost unexampled; more than 300 MSS. are known to exist still, and it was translated into most European languages. He professes to have started in 1322 and certainly the book was written before 1371. After 34 years of travel, he came home crippled with rheumatic gout, in spite of having drunk thrice or four times from the Fountain of Youth, "whereof they who drink ever, never

have sickness, but appear ever young". The English version, by a gross interpolation, makes him submit his book for the Pope's approval at Rome—in days when the Popes were notoriously at Avignon! Again and again he speaks as an eye-witness; yet there is scarcely a sentence in the book which has not been exposed as borrowed, and sometimes distorted, from real travellers like Odoric. But he certainly was a great literary artist: he knows how to exploit to its utmost the thrill of the Great Unknown. Moreover, like Swift in *Gulliver*, he has that trick of the side-touch which lends an air of verisimilitude to his most astounding stories. For instance, "and let no man think that I am jesting"—"and whosoever will may believe me, if he will; and whosoever will not, may choose"—"of [the Earthly] Paradise I cannot speak properly, for I was not there; it is far beyond, and I repent my not going there, but I was not worthy"—again, there is a valley in which diamonds grow like mushrooms, "but some are true, and some are false"—again, genuine balsam has the most miraculous properties; but let it be frankly confessed that there are spurious sorts current in the market. Whether he was indeed an Englishman or not, he is most valuable for the social history of Chaucer's day; for his very falsehoods (as we now recognize them to be) added to his popularity with contemporaries and with later generations. Moreover, there is often deep significance even in his "asides" and his most casual reflections. We see the Bible-ignorance characteristic even of the most educated classes. Ignorance of the actual text, e.g. "In that town [of Beersheba] Abraham the Patriarch dwelt a long time. It was founded by Beersheba the wife of Sir Uriah the Knight, on whom King David begat King Solomon the Wise." Ignorance, again, of its true spirit, as in "if we be right children of Christ, we ought to claim the heritage that our father left us, and take it out of heathen men's hands". Equally significant is his attitude towards the puzzle of duplicate or multiple relics, with which this wandering story is naturally confronted. He finds four different Crowns of Thorns preserved as relics in four different places, and explains that

each was employed in successive stages of torture: one of whitethorn, one of barberry, one of wild rose, and one of sea-rushes. There were also two specimens of the spear-head that had pierced the Lord's side; and, more embarrassing still, one was markedly larger than the other. The climax comes with the head of St John at Samaria; "and some men say that the head of St John is at Amiens in Picardy; and other men say that it is the head of St John the Bishop; I know not which is true; but God knows. But, howsoever men worship it, the blessed St John is satisfied."

Behind all this, there was always that which must never be forgotten when we try to comprehend medieval life—the Apocalyptic spirit. The scientific devotion of a Spinoza, refusing the offered professorship at Heidelberg and preferring to live by polishing lenses in complete independence of contemplation, or, again, the intense and perpetual preoccupation of a Darwin, an Edison, a Henry Ford, had their medieval counterparts in monks and hermits who needed nothing beyond bare food and drink in a cell, and whose mental vision was focused upon nothing nearer than the Day of Judgment. It is difficult to realize the extent to which medieval minds were influenced by Apocalyptic ideas, and the haunting fear of Antichrist and Last Judgment at any moment. St Thomas More himself was inclined to believe that those must be imminent in his own day.

St Augustine, a man of real learning in his generation, and one of the greatest of all Christian philosophers quite apart from his compelling literary force, could write: "Whatever knowledge man has acquired outside Holy Writ, if it be harmful is there condemned; if it be wholesome it is there contained." There we have almost the words which tradition ascribes, rightly or wrongly, to Caliph Omar, condemning to the flames that Library of Alexandria which had no equal in the world before it, and was destined to have no rival, even at an immense distance, for the rest of the Middle Ages. "If all those volumes" (so his words are reported) "contain that which is written in the Koran, then they are superfluous; if anything contrary, then they are mischievous: burn them all."

We need scarcely go farther than those words of St Augustine in the fifth century, and St Gregory's attitude in the sixth, and Omar's unquestionable holocaust in the seventh, to explain why, on the whole, Latin Europe possessed in A.D. 1000 scarcely more than the shadow of a shade of what Alexandria had known in the year 200. The first of hindrances (apart from those common to all reconstructions after great wars) was "the wide acceptance of the Christian doctrine that the body was of little importance in comparison with the soul".<sup>5</sup> Yet there was another doctrine which worked not only negatively but positively; that of Macrocosm and Microcosm. This, though primarily Greek and pagan, and never officially proclaimed by the Church, did in fact pass into Christian teaching with many other such elements, and was accepted by ecclesiastical leaders. It represented the world as a living being; Man and Universe are constructed on the same lines; and, in consequence, we must interpret the human frame by extra-human analogies. It was a natural corollary of this creed that men should believe the ocean to contain the counterpart of all that exists on land; the horse had its double in the sea-horse, the lion in the sea-lion, etc. This is the fancy to which Andrew Marvell alludes in his garden-poem:

*That ocean where each kind*

*Doth straight its own resemblance find.*

This, no doubt, is what the medieval priest was thinking of when he told his flock that the broiled fish (*piscis assus*) of Luke xxiv. 42 was an "ass fish". The consequence of this strained analogy was, that the stars of heaven were believed to influence the parts of man's body and the course of his life. Thus belief in astrology went far to supersede anatomy and physiology. Many pushed this so far as to arrive at absolute fatalism: Chaucer, as we have seen, shared with his contemporaries a lively interest in that problem. Even the greatest minds were deeply preoccupied. St Thomas Aquinas concludes that the stars do indeed influence human actions, but do not compel them: that, of course, would be a negation of freewill. He writes: "We must say that the majority of men follow their passions, which are impulses of sensual

appetite whereunto the heavenly bodies may co-operate, while there are a few wise folk who resist such passions. Therefore astrologers, while they are able in the majority of cases [*in pluribus*] to predict truly, and especially in general, yet cannot do so in special cases, since nothing prevents a man from resisting his passions by means of freewill. Wherefore astrologers themselves say that the wise man ruleth the stars, to wit, in so far as he ruleth his own passions" (*Sum. theol.* 1a. q. CXV, art. 4, ad. 3).

Thus, on the one hand, we must recognize that the medieval Church did steadily maintain among men the general conception of an Orderly Universe, concordant with man's moral aspirations. But from that merit we must deduct much, when we consider how selfishly she interpreted this idea of Order, and how incapable she was of facing that which later experience has taught, that truth emerges at least as much from men's honest differences as from supine acquiescence in the claims of dominant authority, however imposing and time-honoured.

### 34. MEDICINE

This, after all, is the field in which medieval science can best be studied; for here we have something in which all men are interested, great and small. Why was medieval progress so slow in a matter so vital to every rank of society? It is fairly comprehensible that clerical conservatism should have cared little for Bacon's ideal of a scientifically accurate Bible or accurate translations from the Greek Fathers; and, again, that nobody should have paid attention to his hint of possible aeronautics; or, still further, that his similar surmise of an American Continent should have slumbered until it was picked up by Cardinal Peter d'Ailly in the fifteenth century, and treated more seriously by Columbus a couple of generations later. We are not so very much surprised, again, that Europe should not have taken to printing until more than a century after Marco Polo's description of China might have shown the way. But it is far more strange that, in medicine, Dr Singer can pass on from the death of Galen (A.D. 199) to write, "the Dark Ages [for medicine] have begun. Anatomy in the pagan world descends into darkness more abruptly, but not more surely, than philosophy."<sup>1</sup> Here again we must note what the date proves, that it is not merely a question of Christian influence; decay had already set in before Constantine the Great. But why, when the world settled down again, was there not a more real advance in medicine? After the barbarian invasions, there still lingered some remnants of Greek medical science under Islam; and, in the West, Salerno kept some knowledge of the Greek language and tradition, and even some remnants of the ancient writings: but the main stream came through Arabs and Jews. These Arabs were supreme in this post-classical medicine from the eighth to the thirteenth century. The most important of the Greek writers were translated into Arabic; and, for centuries, the West



possessed nothing better than Latin versions of these Arabic translations from Hippocrates, Galen and Celsus. Such Arabic-Jewish translations "provided the staple reading in the medieval Universities throughout the Middle Ages". At the monastery of Monte Cassino, Constantinus "the African" (Chaucer's "cursed monk Dan Constantine") began his series of translations from the Arabic. "An ignorant and dishonest worker", Dr Singer calls him;<sup>2</sup> and Professor Gurlt supplies chapter and verse for this characterization (1,670). To quote Dr Singer again: "This Arabic-Latin literature is generally characterized by the qualities most often associated with the words *medieval* and *scholastic*. It is extremely verbose and almost wholly devoid of the literary graces. An immense amount of attention is paid to the mere arrangement of the material, which often occupies its author more than the ideas that are to be conveyed. Great stress is laid on argument, especially in the form of the syllogism, while observation of Nature is entirely in the background. Above all, there is a constant appeal to the authority of the ancient masters, especially Aristotle and Galen. Lip-service is often paid to Hippocrates, but his spirit is absent from these windy discussions."<sup>3</sup> It is to this scholastic and disputatious spirit, as apart from real observation, "that we owe the almost complete absence of scientific advance between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries". On the other hand, "monastic medicine had no thought save for the immediate relief of the patient. All theoretical knowledge was permitted to lapse. Anatomy and Physiology perished."<sup>4</sup>

In this field, far more clearly than in any other department of science, we can trace the direct influence of the Church: here, most of all, Europe suffered from that fatal exaggeration which enthroned Theology not merely as mother, but as Queen, of all the sciences. Medicine was discouraged for the clergy by the Councils of Reims in 1125 and Lateran in 1139. Apart from the general principle of contempt for mere flesh, there was here the special principle that "men vowed to religion should not touch those things which cannot honourably be mentioned in speech"; and in fact Abbot Faricius of

Abingdon [1110], who had been a noted physician before he became a monk, was rejected for a bishopric for that definite cause. The Council of Tours (1163) forbade surgery for them, on the principle that *The Church abhorreth bloodshed*. Innocent III dealt with the case of a monk who had operated for scrofula upon a woman who, exposing herself afterwards against his bidding to the wind, caught a chill and died. The man had sinned (wrote Innocent) by usurping another man's office; "if, however, this deed was a fault of compassion and not of cupidity, and he was skilled in the exercise of surgery, then, after condign satisfaction, he may be permitted to celebrate divine service again." The Council of Nîmes (1284) and that of Bayeux (1300) decreed: "Let no subdeacon, deacon, or priest exercise any act of surgery which extendeth to cautery or incision." That of Würzburg (1298) repeated the prohibition in other words.<sup>5</sup>

And while the Church thus discouraged surgery, she actually prohibited anatomy. This story is summed up in Professor Gurlt's classical *Geschichte der Chirurgie* (Berlin, 1898, vol. 1, p. 673): "All the universities stood under the jurisdiction of the Church; the teaching there was done under her regulations, and the books to be read there were chosen by her; therefore her education, especially in medicine, was purely theoretical and dogmatic, quite unpractical, consisting merely in the recitation of a Greek or Arabian writer in Latin translation, with the professor's interpretation. . . . Anatomy was in a very poor state in the old universities except Bologna, where Mondino and Barbucio taught. The statutes of Montpellier, for instance (A.D. 1340), prescribe that there shall be an 'anatomy' at least every two years. These so-called 'anatomies', which, until late in the following centuries, were held periodically and generally lasted several days, consisted in this, that the interior cavities of a corpse (usually a criminal's) were opened by a surgeon, while the professor, standing by, gave an explanation of the contents. In the earlier centuries of the Middle Ages surgery formed no subject of university teaching; scholars had to fall back upon private teachers and upon the study of the surgical works,

which existed only in MS. . . . Soon after 1300, the medical faculty [of Paris] declared itself as an opponent of surgery, and in 1350 it forbade the practice of manual operations to its bachelors. Thus prospective surgeons were, for a long time, thrown back upon private teachers; for at the College of Surgeons in Paris there was no teaching until far later, and it was not until 1634 that its students could follow a surgical course, which was given in Latin. There was no question of clinical teaching in any of the universities. . . . Thus the medieval instruction at the universities was insufficient, almost entirely oral, consisting of the reading and commenting on ancient authors." Outside this sacred ring stood the mere practical surgeons, the barber-surgeons, men of whom the great doctor Lanfranc wrote satirically: "our pride in these present days [1280] hath left the office of phlebotomy to barbers, though of old it was the work of doctors, and especially when surgeons exercised that office." Such barber-surgeons needed neither Latin nor books; but many of them acquired great practical dexterity, especially in the surgery of wounds, for which the Crusades and other constant wars gave considerable practice. Yet, even there, we may trace the terrible disadvantages of this prohibition of anatomy. Abbot Guibert de Nogent tells us, in special admiration of King Baldwin's generous and humane character, that, when he was severely wounded, and dangerous internal suppuration supervened under a treacherous film of growing flesh, he refused to save himself at the expense of a fellow-creature's life. His physician had recommended "that he should command one of his Saracen prisoners (for it was criminal to ask it of any Christian), of his own stature, to be wounded in the same place wherein he himself had been smitten, and, after the infliction of this wound, to be slain" for post-mortem study. Baldwin's "extreme piety" was shocked at this suggestion; but he permitted the experiment to be made upon a bear, "a beast that is useless except as food for sport".<sup>6</sup> Other great men were not so scrupulous. Frederick II, "the marvel of the world", had strong scientific interests, with the power of gratifying every whim. On one occa-

sion, the chronicler Salimbene tells us, he fed two men sumptuously at dinner, and then sent one to sleep, the other to take vigorous exercise. After a sufficient interval, he caused both to be opened, in order to judge which had digested best. Another time, he enclosed a man in a hermetically sealed cask; and, since the vessel when opened showed no soul, but only the corpse, this strengthened his disbelief in survival after death. Here again we see the materialism of the unbeliever corresponding to the materialism of the Church, with her visions of souls wafted heavenwards from the body in the shape of a little child or a transparent crystal sphere. The naked child especially, comfortably nursed in the folds of Abraham's bosom, was the time-honoured picture in paintings and sculptures of the Last Judgment.\*

But let us return to the professional students, and especially the universities. The belief that monks and friars were the doctors of the Middle Ages is a gigantic delusion. If the chroniclers, here and there, celebrate a monk's skill, the context itself nearly always shows that this was exceptional, and that this particular physician, like Abbot Faricius, had mastered his profession outside, in his "worldly" days. A few early friars may be found, here and there, tending lepers as an exercise of extreme Christian charity; but it would be difficult to find a single case, after the days of Francis and Dominic, of leper-hospitals regularly visited by them. Indeed, quite apart from the writings of distinguished ascetics like St Bernard, who cuts short all valetudinarian complaints with the brutal "thou art a monk, not a physician", formal ecclesiastical legislation ought to have been sufficient to cast the gravest doubts upon this legend. Medical books are often found in monastic libraries; but all other evidence suggests that little was known or practised in the infirmary beyond the traditional leechdoms, or the old wives' remedies, to which we shall come presently. As for medical practice among outsiders, this is often expressly forbidden to monks, as offering too great temptations to private property and covetousness.†

\* See, for instance, H. S. Bennett, *Life on the Medieval Manor*, facing p. 10.

It is in the universities, therefore, that we must study the evolution of medicine, and especially of surgery; for in those days there was no division between the two branches of the profession, and there are some modern practitioners who regard that division as regrettable.

Nearly a century after Constantine's translations from the Arabic came the far more numerous and better translations of Gerard of Cremona (d. 1185), upon whose 92 volumes the later scholastic medicine was almost entirely based. These in their turn were founded upon Arabic versions of Galen. To these writers "the main mass of medical knowledge [in Europe] before 1500 can be traced". And, even within the narrow limitations, the sources themselves were far from pure. The complacent medieval ignorance of Greek left men dependent upon the errors of translators at first or second or third hand; so that one of the first tasks of fifteenth-century medicine was to discover what it was that Galen had actually said. Only then, at the end of the Middle Ages, were really accurate translations made from this man upon whom Western medicine had practically depended for more than 1000 years.

Still worse were the deficiencies of practical anatomy and dissection. In 1238, the heretical Emperor Frederick II did indeed prescribe that, at Salerno, a corpse should be dissected once every five years in the presence of the physicians and surgeons.<sup>8</sup> But it is not till about 1300 that we find regular dissection, public or semi-public, even at the universities; and it is very significant that this is at Bologna, which, with Padua, was least theological among European universities, and where the dominant faculty was Law. The practice probably grew up under cover of legal requirements, as a development from the practice of post-mortem examinations. "But still dissection did no more, and was asked to do no more, than verify [the Arab] Avicenna, whom nobody doubted. It was, in fact, little but an aid to the memory of students."<sup>9</sup> For the practice could not possibly become general in face of Boniface VIII's bull forbidding the mutilation of corpses (1300); a bull really aimed rather at injudicious relic-worshippers and superstitious fastidiousness as to places of

burial, but which, as contemporary practitioners complained, did in fact tell against them. When, in 1345, Guido da Vigevano wrote a remarkable book with admirable anatomical miniatures, he explained in his preface that the Church forbade the actual process by which these drawings must have been obtained. Not until Sixtus IV (1471-84) did any Pope permit dissections, on condition of an ecclesiastical permit; but he had studied at Bologna and Padua. "From then onward the supply of corpses for dissection, though limited, was fairly regular." The practice was confirmed by Clement VII (1523-4). As the main beginnings of practical anatomy in the Middle Ages were due to the legists, so its finest performances, beyond all comparison, were due to the Renaissance artists and sculptors, in their struggle for perfect representation of the human body. Not until the epoch-making Vesalius, who comes just outside our period, was any medical work illustrated with figures even remotely comparable in accuracy of detail to the studies of Verrocchio, Dürer, Michael Angelo, Raphael, and, above all, Leonardo da Vinci. The whole story of the relations between theology and medicine affords a commentary on that dry remark of Chaucer concerning the Doctour of Physike: "His study was but little of the Bible." And it was the spirit of the medical faculties in the universities, especially at Padua, which gave rise to that proverb which Sir Thomas Browne took for his text: *Ubi tres medici, duo athei*.

This ignorance of anatomical facts, sometimes even of the simplest and most important, was a terrible drawback. The stomach, for instance, was regarded as a cauldron in which the food is cooked by the heat of the liver, which, like a furnace, keeps it simmering. Bernard de Gourdon, Professor at Montpellier from 1285 onwards, wrote what became a standard book for doctors in 1305. In one case, at least, he had to supply the want of human dissection by an empirical observation which has its own grim humour. It is uncertain how far he could distinguish the oesophagus from the stomach; and, if he dimly suspected the peristaltic action of the former (a step beyond Constantinus, for whom it was a

mere passive funnel to the stomach), this was because he had learned "that in the case of certain Jews, hung up by the heels, the food given ascended to the stomach, showing that this organ possessed the power of attracting food to itself".<sup>10</sup>

England produced no medical writer of Continental reputation. "John of Gaddesden, the first English writer on medicine (1316), . . . was a dexterous plagiarist", as indeed were many of his predecessors and successors on the Continent, after the fashion or example of "Dan Constantine".<sup>11</sup> Our John Arderne [1380], again, though a skilful and successful surgeon, stole most of his writings from other authors. In the preface to his best known book, on the fistula, he gives rules for professional etiquette and success which have been traced back by modern students through a whole pedigree of plagiarism. The section is taken without acknowledgment from William de Saliceto, who in substance rests upon Archimæthæus of Salerno [1100], who took it, at several removes, from the school of Hippocrates. To that extent, therefore, we must discount our Englishman's work as *cliché*; yet even *cliché* must have some solid substratum of truth if it is to attract both writer and reader; and in this particular case we may trace human nature not only as it was among the ancient Greeks and our own medieval ancestors, but as it is around us and within us to-day. Arderne writes of the "leech":<sup>12</sup> "First, it behoveth him that will profit in this craft that he set God afore evermore in all his works, and evermore call meekly with heart and mouth His help; and sometime help from his earnings poor men after his might, that they by their prayers may get him grace of the Holy Ghost.\* And that he be not found temerarious or boastful in his sayings or in his deeds; and abstain he him from much speech, and most among great men; and answer he slyly to things asked, that he be not y-take [i.e. caught] in his words. . . . Also, be a leche not much laughing nor much playing. And, as much as he may without harm, flee he the fellowship of knaves and of dishonest persons. And be he evermore occupied in things

\* Compare the saying of Ambrose Paré (1517-90): "I dressed him, and God cured him."

that pertain to his craft; either read he, or study he, or write or pray he; for the exercise of books honoureth a leech. For why? he shall both be honoured and he shall be more wise. And above all this it profiteth to him that he be found evermore sober; for drunkenness destroyeth all virtue and bringeth it to nought, as saith a wise man, *Ebrietas frangit quicquid sapencia tangit* :\* 'Drunkenness breaketh what so wisdom toucheth.' Be he content, in strange places, of meat and drink there found, using measure in all things. Scorn he no man. . . . If there be made speech to him of any leech, neither set he him at nought nor praise him too much or commend him, but thus may he courteously answer : 'I have not exact knowledge of him, but I learned nought nor I have not heard of him but good and honest.' And of this shall honour and thankings of each party increase and multiply in him; after this, honour is in the honourant and not in the honoured. Look he not over openly [at] the lady or the daughters or other fair women in great houses, nor proffer them not to kiss, . . . that he run not into the indignation of the lord nor of none of his. In as much as he may, grieve he no servant, but get he their love and their good will. . . . When sick men, forsooth, or any of them beside cometh to the leech to ask help or counsel of him, be he not to them over stern nor over homely, but moderate in bearing after the requirements of the persons; to some reverently, to some commonly. For, according to wise men, overmuch homeliness breedeth dispising. Also it speedeth that he have seeming excusations, [e.g.] that he may not incline to their askings, without harming or without indignation of some great man or friend, or for necessary occupation. Or feign he him hurt, or for to be sick, or some other decent cause by which he may likely be excused. Therefore, if he will favour to any man's asking, make he covenant for his travail, and take it beforehand. But advice the leech himself well that he give no certain answer in any cause, but he see first the sickness and the manner of it; and when he hath seen and assaied it, although

\* This verse is scratched, in a hand of about Arderne's time, on a pillar in Ashwell Church, Herts.



him seem that the sick may be healed, nevertheless he shall make pronostication to the patient [of] the perils to come if the cure be deferred. And if he see the patient pursue busily the cure, then, after that the state of the patient requireth, ask he boldly more or less [fee]; but ever be he ware of scanty askings, for over scarce askings set at nought both the market and the thing. Therefore for the cure of fistula . . . when it is curable, ask he competently of a worthy man and a great an hundred mark or forty pound, with robes and fees of an hundred shilling, term of life, by year. Of less men forty pound or forty mark ask he without fees; and take he not less than an hundred shilling. For never in all my life took I less than an hundred shilling for cure of that sickness.\* Nevertheless do another man as him think better and more speedful. And if the patients or their friends or servants ask how much time he hopeth to heal it, evermore let the leech promise the double that he supposeth to speed by half; that is, if the leech hope to heal the patient in twenty weeks—that is the common course of curing—add he so many over. For it is better that the term be lengthened than the cure. For prolongation of the cure giveth cause of despairing to the patients, when trust to the leech is most hope of health. And if the patient consider or wonder or ask why that he put him so long a time of curing, since that he healed him by the half, answer he that it was for that the patient was strong-hearted, and suffered well sharp things, and that he was of good complexion and had able flesh to heal; and feign he other causes pleasurable to the patient, for patients of such words are proud and delighted. Also dispose a leech him that in clothes and other apparel be he honest, not likening himself in apparel or bearing to ministers, but in clothing and bearing show he the manner of clerks. For why? it is seemly for any discreet man clad with clerk's clothing for to occupy gentlemen's tables. Have the leech also clean hands and well shapen nails, and cleansed from all blackness and filth. And

\* Roughly the equivalent to £200 to-day. There is probably a good deal of boastful exaggeration here: but we do find occasional record of very high fees.

be he courteous at lords' tables, and displease he not in words or deeds to the guests sitting by; hear he many things but speak he but few. . . . And when he shall speak, be the words short, and, as much as he may, fair and reasonable and without swearing. Before that there be never found double word in his mouth, for if he be found true in his words few or none shall doubt in his deeds. Learn also a young leech good proverbs pertaining to his craft in comforting of patients. . . . Also it speedeth that a leech can talk of good tales and of honest that may make the patients to laugh, as well of the Bible as of other tragedies; and any other things which are no trouble, while they make or induce a light heart to the patient or the sick man. Discover never the leech unwarily the counsels of his patients, as well of men as of women, nor set not one to another at nought, although he have cause, that he be not guilty of counsel; for as a man see thee conceal well another man's counsel he will trust better in thee. Many things, forsooth, been to be kept of a leech, without these that are said afore, that may not be noted here for over much occupying. . . . If the patient insist steadfastly that he be cured, or ask if he may be cured, then say the leech thus: 'I doubt not, if God help us, and thy good patience following, if thou wilt competently make satisfaction to me, as such a cure—not little to be commended—supposing all things to be kept that ought to be kept, and left that ought to be left, as it is said, I shall be able to bring this cure to a loveable end and healthful.' And then accord they of covenant, of which covenant—all excusation put aback—take he the half before hand; and then assign a day to the patient when he will begin."

Side by side with these works which have at least some claim to learning, medieval manuscripts swarm with semi-magical recipes and popular traditions of which the most useful prescribe simple decoctions of herbs or common-sense practical observations. Perhaps the most interesting of these, especially when we consider its legendary origin, is the Welsh *Meddygon Myddfai* ("Physicians of Myddfai"). Under the final cliff of the Caermarthenshire Black Moun-

tains stands a pool suggestively dark and lonely, the Lesser Van Lake. Here a peasant called Gwyn, keeping his cattle by the lake-side, saw a beautiful lady on the surface of the water, combing her hair as reflected there. He held out to her his own barley-bread and cheese; she refused, and disappeared under the water. Next day the same vision and the same refusal. On the third day at last, she accepted his gift and came to land. He declared his love and besought her for wife: after long persuasion, she consented, on condition that, if he permitted himself to strike her thrice without reason, she would leave him for ever. Yet, having thus consented in word, she dived again and left him disconsolate. At last, turning round, he saw an old man of majestic appearance, leading two maidens by the hand, indistinguishable twins. He greeted Gwyn courteously, and expressed himself as willing to ratify his daughter's promise, if the lover could pick out his own lady. Gwyn, who had fortunately noticed a slight peculiarity in the sandal of his beloved, emerged successfully from this test; and the majestic stranger promised to endow the couple with as many cattle as his daughter could enumerate without pausing for breath. At this point it was she who rose nobly to the challenge; and the father proved as good as his word. Gwyn and Nelferch thus lived happily for several years, and had three sons. Their eldest was seven, when Gwyn and his wife were invited to a marriage. She dawdled under the excuse of fatigue; he struck her with the gloves which hung from his hand. She reminded him: "That is the first." Some years after, they were asked to a christening. She burst into tears in the church, and he clapped her impatiently on the shoulder. "I wept for the trouble this poor child would have on earth; but that is your second." Later again, this child died, and Nelferch burst out laughing. Gwyn laid his hand impatiently on her and demanded the reason. "I laugh because the baby is now free from all pain and suffering: but this is the third time: farewell!" She went home, called all the cattle, who came at the sound of her voice, crossed the hill and came to her own lake, where she and they vanished under the waters. Gwyn drowned himself in

despair. His three sons haunted the lake-side day after day, until at last the mother came back. She offered to the eldest a humanitarian mission: he was to found a great line of physicians. She took him to a meadow hard by, and taught him the virtues of all herbs and their use. He became official physician to Rhys Grig, Lord Llandovery and Dinevor, who gave him lands and privileges, and his descendants shared his medical talents: some claimed descent from him as late as the mid-seventeenth century. Rhys Grig, at least, is an historical personage: he fought constantly against the English and, after varying fortunes, died of wounds received at the siege of Caermarthen in 1234. The book *Meddygon Myddfai* claims to record the supernatural teaching of this fairy-medicine. It is in fact mainly a collection of traditional recipes. Some repose upon long experience and common sense: e.g. go for your drinking water to the place where women get their washing water. Others, again, are of the type of which a specimen may be quoted here. "*Against Tooth-ache*. Take a candle of mutton-fat, mingled with seed of sea-holly; burn this candle as close as possible to the tooth, holding a basin of cold water beneath it. The worms [which are gnawing the tooth] will fall into the water to escape the heat of the candle."<sup>13</sup>

We must, however, credit the Middle Ages, and the Church especially, with important developments of the hospital system, far beyond anything that had been known under pagan Rome. These were partly for the casual sick or poor, but more often still for the aged and infirm: rather almshouses than hospitals in the modern sense. They frequently fell into debt and decay, in those days of economic and social uncertainties; but they were an important factor in medieval life. Leprosy and "St Anthony's Fire" were, next to fevers, the most dreaded of medieval diseases. The latter, due to poisoning from corrupt rye-bread, seems to have been at its worst in the eleventh century, when the peasants had so hard a struggle for life. Leprosy, which is plausibly traced to rotten fish, created a large number of charitable hospitals. A good many of these became extinct in process of time. This was

perhaps mainly due to the difficulty of maintaining any public endowment for many generations in those days of more troubled social life and comparatively few business safeguards. Clement V, in the Ecumenical Council of Vienne (1311), expressed his bitter indignation at the negligence or dishonesty of executors or governors of leper-houses, alms-houses or hospitals, who let them go to ruin or embezzled the revenues.<sup>14</sup> But the occasional disappearance of these leper-hospitals, or their conversion to other uses, may have been due mainly to improved conditions of living: the mass of our population were perhaps better nourished in the fifteenth century than in any age until the time of our grandparents. There would seem to be no indication that the decline of leprosy (with which medieval doctors often seem to have confused other skin diseases) was brought about by any great advance in medical science. There is considerable significance in an Oxford agreement of 1356. By this, the city formally grants to the Chancellor of the University jurisdiction over the market: "and over all flesh or fish that shall be found to be putrid, unclean, vicious or otherwise unfit . . . on this condition, that the things forfeited be given to the Hospital of St John." Similarly, a Scottish Act of Parliament (1386) enacted that corrupt pork or salmon should be forfeited and given to "the poor leper-folk". At Berwick, a similar law added "if there be no leper-folk, the rotten pork or salmon shall be utterly destroyed".<sup>15</sup> It was this care for leprosy, in earlier times, which did much to develop what is perhaps the only real invention of importance in our period: the realization of the infectious nature of certain diseases. This realization, again, led to the creation of the quarantine system. Against those benefits we must set the generally defective sanitation of towns and cottages. Monasteries and great castles, on the other hand, especially those of the later medieval centuries, such as Hurstmonceux, had often a drainage system so full and elaborate as to give birth to modern legends of "secret passages".

## 35. FREETHOUGHT AND INQUISITION

With the Inquisition proper, which some might call the most characteristic of all medieval institutions, I have no space to deal fully here. I shall say nothing, concerning the institution itself, which I have not already said at greater length elsewhere, especially in my recent *Inquisition and Liberty*. Here, it will be best to plunge straight into the heart of the subject, to picture things as they were in the golden thirteenth century, and then to explain how almost inevitably they had grown to what they were.

A distinguished Roman Catholic historian of philosophy has written: "The thirteenth century believed that it had realized a state of stable equilibrium. . . . Their extraordinary optimism led them to believe they had arrived at a state close to perfection."<sup>1</sup> This, behind its obvious exaggerations, is in many ways only too true; society did to a great extent accept the Church's claims to perfection, and her pitiless repression of all that opposed this claim. But, on the other hand, here is a cry which comes to us from the very days which Professor de Wulf is describing. Berthold of Regensburg is here speaking; that Franciscan whom Roger Bacon singles out as the greatest preacher of his time; the man whose influence and success became legendary; the greatest mission preacher, perhaps, of the whole Middle Ages. He is warning his audience against the heretics, one of his commonest and most absorbing themes; and he says: "Had I a sister in a country wherein were only one heretic, yet that one heretic would keep me in fear for her. . . . I myself, by God's grace, am as fast rooted in the Christian faith as any Christian man should rightly be; yet, rather than dwell knowingly one brief fortnight in the same house with an heretic, I would dwell a whole year with five hundred devils!"<sup>2</sup> So also his younger contemporary, the Dominican Étienne de Bourbon, com-

plains that, while heretics pervert many from the Faith, none is ever reconverted. He explains it ingeniously: "Wine may turn into vinegar, but never vinegar to wine." Here, from the modern Professor of Louvain and the ancient Franciscan toiler among the people, we have two complementary sides of one truth which is fundamental to any full comprehension of medieval society. The Church was ubiquitous, omniscient, theoretically inerrant and omnicompetent: therefore, in her official capacity, this Totalitarian State was almost hysterically self-conscious, self-important, and self-confident. Yet all the while, in the background, there were almost equally hysterical misgivings and fears among those earnest Churchmen upon whom fell the burden and heat of toil among the masses. How had this dualism, this paradox, come about?

It is only loosely that we can call the Middle Ages an age of faith; it would be more strictly true to call this period an age of acquiescence. Every great creed at its beginning can afford to be far more liberal than when it has stiffened into tradition. In the Epistle to the Hebrews faith is essentially a reaching out towards the future. By gradual transference, the Church began to regard this virtue as reposing mainly upon past events; this narrowing its own creed and provoking criticism. Those who are kindled by the fire of any new and great idea see much more clearly than their successors that it is the broad outline that matters. The general spirit which animates them all is so nearly the same that it obliterates minor differences, or at least throws them into the background. Renan points out how much freedom of thought there was in the early days of Islam; and we sometimes find astoundingly liberal ideas in the early Christian Fathers, in whose days faith still looked so much more forward than backward. Justin Martyr, the first of the apologists whose works have come down to us, claims in so many words that Socrates and Heraclitus were Christians, since they lived by reason; that is, Justin sees an ally and a fellow-Christian in every man who really strives with all his heart for the truth.<sup>3</sup> St Augustine, writing nearly 300 years later, goes far to abandon the historical ground, by emphasizing the fact that these almost

incredible claims of Christianity have, in fact, fought their way against the heaviest odds, and reached the first rank among world beliefs. Dante, following him, put the argument into one single sentence which, by its epigrammatic brevity, exaggerates the boldness of the claim. "If" (he says) "the world actually did turn to Christianity without [the persuasion of] miracles, then that [one miracle, in itself,] is such that the others are not worth the hundredth of it."<sup>4</sup> St Gregory the Great finds himself obliged to contend that, in his own days of less and less frequent physical miracles, the real basis for faith is in the moral miracle of the Church's hold upon mankind, and her good effect upon men's minds. St Odo of Cluny, the practical founder of the great Cluniac order, wrote emphatically to the same effect in about A.D. 940. The logical conclusion of all these sayings would seem to be, that the higher faith is a creed independent of physical miracles, and relying solely upon its obvious moral superiority over its competitors. Yet nobody attempted—at least, no orthodox writer—to follow them up to their logical consequences. Here, as on so many other important subjects, the medieval Church was content to suffer incompatible doctrines, and to live from hand to mouth by expedients. Such, then, being the uncertain and inconsistent attitude of great men in the early Middle Ages, it is natural that the first great original thinker produced by Western Christendom after the barbarian invasions should have had great difficulty in reconciling himself with the orthodox teaching of his day. This John the Scot (Johannes Scotus Eriugena) reconciled theology and philosophy in his own mind only by contending that, however they seemed to conflict, they were various aspects of the same truth; that the light of truth is iridescent, always the same in itself, but showing a bewildering variety of colours to the human eye, according to the angle from which we regard it. This was not the sort of doctrine to commend itself to strict orthodoxy; the current teaching was inspired rather by acquiescence than by living faith. While, therefore, saints were driven here and there, by their own love of truth, to speculations which were hardly consistent with many of the main



doctrines of the mediæval Church, yet, all the while, multitudes lived on in heathen superstitions just veneered with Christianity.

This evidence, which might be indefinitely reinforced, may suffice to suggest that there has been no time—at any rate since the very earliest days of Christianity—at which the official Church doctrine has been both fully probed and consistently accepted. There was in fact a great deal more enquiry in the Middle Ages than historians have usually realized. Joinville is an admirable witness here, because he gives his evidence so naturally and has no axe to grind; and because his testimony is so entirely borne out by other quite independent witnesses. He tells us of involuntary doubt—of the bishop whose life was a torture because he wished passionately to believe, yet could not exclude disbelief in Transubstantiation. Again, he shows us St Louis, naturally one of the kindest-hearted of men, yet so loth that a Christian should risk his faith by arguing with a Jew, that he will not permit this to any but a very learned cleric, adding: "The layman, when he hears any speak ill of the Christian faith, should defend it not with words but with the sword, which he should thrust into the other's belly as far as it will go." And, lastly, he tells us how a friend of his, a friar, met an old woman in the streets of Acre bearing a chafing-dish of live charcoal in her right hand, and a flask of water in her left, and saying that she meant to burn up paradise with one and quench hell fire with the other, "so that no man might henceforth do right for the hope of heaven or for the fear of hell, but only for the pure love of God, who is so worthy and can do for us what is best".

This last instance is of extreme significance, for it brings us at once to oriental philosophy, and reminds us how much the Crusades did in this way to stimulate freethought. Saracens and Jews had many virtues which honest Christians could not help recognizing; and many prejudices disappeared when men saw others living so respectably under a religion so different from their own.<sup>5</sup> Several writers in the thirteenth century give us, in one form or another, the fable of the Three Rings,

which Lessing has immortalized in his play of *Nathan the Wise*. And the old woman's words at Acre recall those of the great Mohammedan philosopher Ibn-Roschid (Averroës) who wrote against the idea of heaven represented in the Koran, saying: "Among dangerous fictions, we must class those which tend to make us look upon virtue as only a means to happiness. If that be so, virtue has no meaning, since we abstain from self-gratification only in the hope of being repaid with interest. The brave man thus faces death only to avoid some worse pain; the just man respects another's possessions only in order to earn double their value", and so on. The direct influence of Arab philosophy on freethought in Christendom, and especially that of this particular man, Averroës, was very great. As Renan pointed out, he has the singular fortune of being better known outside than inside his own country. His life, roughly, fills the twelfth century, 1126-98. He is not the greatest of the Arab philosophers, but the last, summing up the work of his predecessors. This Arab culture, of which his is the last flicker, had lasted about 200 years. The Caliph Al Hakem II, who reigned at Cordova from 961-76, collected a library reckoned (with probable exaggeration) at 400,000 volumes, and encouraged Christian and Jewish as well as Muslim scholars. That library was publicly destroyed by reactionaries after his death; and for several generations the pendulum swung backwards and forwards between philosophy and ecclesiastical tradition; so that Averroës was provoked into writing: "Of all tyrannies the worst is the tyranny of the priest." He himself was deprived, for religious reasons, of his position as judge. Thus Renan can truly write: "When, therefore, the sovereigns were intimidated by fanaticism, philosophy disappeared; the manuscripts were destroyed by royal decree; and Christendom alone remembered that Islam had had scholars and thinkers. . . . Arab philosophy furnishes an almost unique example of a very lofty culture suppressed almost instantaneously without leaving any trace behind, so that it was almost forgotten by the nation which had begotten it."<sup>6</sup>

At this time, however, learning was making such rapid

progress in Christendom, and at Paris especially (teachers and pupils having so far multiplied that the formation of a university was imminent or possibly actual), that the doctrines of this Muslim school, translated by Jews from Arabic into Latin, became welcome food for speculation north of the Pyrenees. From that time forward we find occasional condemnations, pointing to a great deal more that was concealed underground, of scholars who are teaching doctrines definitely derived from Averroës and his predecessors. In the first place the Universe is mechanical; there is no God that directs it. Secondly, the universality of the human intellect is so emphasized as practically to deny the individual soul. Thirdly, matter is eternal; there has been no such thing as creation and there will be no such thing as destruction. There, then, are three categorical denials of Christian thought—no Providence, no Immortality, no Creation. William of Auvergne, Bishop of Paris [1240], devoted most of his voluminous writings to a formal refutation of Averroism. He complains of its popularity at his University, writing: "Many men swallow these conclusions, taking them in without investigation by discussion or criticism; but consenting to them and holding them as proved and certain." A century later, St Thomas Aquinas and others show us that similar doctrines had quite a strong following among the teachers in the University. Such teaching, complains Aquinas, lurked in corners and addressed itself chiefly to the unfledged youth; but an Averroist would have answered that this concealment was natural enough, considering the activity of the Inquisition. In 1277 comes a similar batch of condemned propositions, including three still more offensive. And already these sceptics were trying to defend themselves by a subterfuge which remained popular throughout the rest of the Middle Ages—the plea that a thing, though theologically false, might be philosophically true, or *vice versa*.<sup>1</sup> So that, by this time, we have a state of mind which is as definitely sceptical as the scepticism of the eighteenth century or of our own day. It contends, first, that philosophy has a right to her own conclusions, with which theology has no right whatever to interfere; and, secondly, that Christianity

must be judged by just the same standard as other religions, and that the wise man will avoid committing himself to any. Dante fills a whole circle of his hell with those who had died in disbelief of the immortality of the soul: "there lie more than a thousand of them."<sup>8</sup> Petrarch, in the next generation, tells us that "modern philosophers are accustomed to think they have done nothing if they fail to bark against Christ and his supernatural teaching";<sup>9</sup> they call Christ an idiot, and look upon all who undertake to defend Christianity as fools. Such kind of talk, he tells us, was fashionable among the upper classes at Venice; but it was specially popular at the University of Paris. About this time the great University of Padua became a focus of Averroism, especially in the medical school. Then, Paduan Averroism spread farther; it spread over all North Italy; so that, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, it had crept out of the obscurity in which the Middle Ages had compelled it to lurk, and had become "almost the official philosophy of Italy in general". The question of the immortality of the soul was discussed even at the Papal Court—but that Pope was Leo X. By this time, the current of Averroism was merged in the general flood of scepticism which accompanied the Renaissance; and we need pursue it no farther.

All this time, far simpler and perhaps more fatal doubts had begun to undermine orthodoxy. These were based partly on man's natural interest in the problem of the Origin of Evil, partly on the urge to get at the actual teaching of this inerrant Bible. For the Bible had slowly drifted out of sight among multitudes ignorant even of Latin (to say nothing of the original languages); and thus, gradually, had become so confined to a particular class, and even to a minority of that class, that it was jealously guarded from the profane populace.

Peter Waldo [1170], a rich merchant of Lyons, was converted in later life by hearing a minstrel recite the story of St Alexis. He hired a priest to translate for him into French the New Testament and "Sentences" from the Fathers. Then he dowered his wife, portioned his two daughters as nuns, and began an evangelical life. His adherents multiplied and

preached; in those days it was only bishops who were accustomed to preach, and that seldom enough. The Archbishop of Lyons excommunicated Waldo for thrusting his sickle into another man's harvest. He appealed to the Pope, who treated him kindly and authorized him to preach when permitted by the priests. This, however, was an impossible concordat; the friction grew, and in 1179 this group submitted their scriptures to Alexander III and his Lateran Council, and begged for definite independent leave to preach. Alexander, who was a great man, treated them with considerable leniency; but in 1184 Lucius III banned them, and this excommunication was repeated still more emphatically by Innocent III, at his great Lateran Council of 1215. In 1229 the Council of Toulouse, confirmed by three archbishops and a papal legate, decreed that no layfolk should possess books of scripture except the Psalter and the Hours; nor might they possess even those except in Latin.<sup>10</sup> This struck directly at the Waldensians, whose whole tenets were founded upon Bible-reading and upon the attempt, more or less successful, to recapture the spirit of the early Church. They had tried hitherto to fit this in with the orthodox scheme, as the Wesleyans did later on; but henceforward they became definitely "dissenters". Yet, more than a generation later, when they were persecuted and outlawed and specially odious to the Inquisition, we have reluctant but brilliant testimony in their favour from the Dominican Étienne de Bourbon, their professional persecutor. He writes: "They know the Apostles' Creed excellently in the vulgar tongue, they learn by heart the Gospels of the New Testament in the vulgar tongue, and repeat them aloud to each other. . . . I have seen a young cowherd who had dwelt but one year in the house of a Waldensian heretic, yet had attended so diligently and repeated so carefully all that he heard as to have learned by heart within that year forty Sunday Gospels, not counting those for feast-days; all which he had learned word for word in his native tongue, apart from other extracts from sermons and prayers. I have also seen some layfolk who were so steeped in their doctrine that they could even repeat by heart a great part of the Evangelists,

as Matthew or Luke, and especially all that is said therein of our Lord's teaching and speeches; so that they could repeat them continuously with scarcely a wrong word here and there. This I say on account of their diligence in evil and the negligence of the Catholics in good: for many of these latter are so negligent of their own and their families' salvation as scarce to know their Pater or their Creed, or to teach the same to their servants."<sup>11</sup> Here, however, as in all great quarrels, we must not see the fault on one side only, and we must remember that, within a generation of this time, St Francis was able to show how it was possible to lead truly evangelical lives without quarrelling with the Church. Yet, on the other hand, we cannot honestly condemn the Waldensians, or even the earlier Albigensians, as men whose social and political heresies would have plunged Europe into barbarism. Nearly all the evidence upon which this judgment has often been based is hopelessly tainted; the words either of orthodox clergy, their professional enemies, or of renegades. Moreover, some of the best among the clergy themselves, such as Bourbon and St Bernard's correspondent Erwin, Provost of Steinfeld, were embarrassed by the apparent honesty and moral integrity of these misguided folk. St Bernard himself, in his violent condemnation, characterizes them as "a vile and rustic crew, unlettered, and altogether unwarlike . . . ignorant peasant-women . . . they do indeed abstain, but they abstain heretically".<sup>12</sup> The same awkward facts confronted St Thomas More. He was puzzled by the apparent "knowledge in Scripture" and "virtuous behaviour" of some heretics, which gained them the favour of "simple folk". Such men "live virtuously, giving their goods in alms". Against this he can only answer dogmatically from the words of the New Testament: "Beware of the false prophets that come to you in the clothinge of shepe, and yet withinfurth be en ravenous wolves." He continues: "For sith that thei, by false doctrine, labour to devoure and destroy mennes soules, we be sure ynough that wolves they be in dede, howe shepishlye soever they looke. And hypocrites must they nedes be, sith they bee so denounced by God's own mouth."<sup>13</sup>

One of the most abhorred heretical tenets, all through our period, was the refusal to swear, even in the law-courts. Lea quotes a case from the year 1320, "in which a poor old woman at Pamiers was submitted to the dreadful death sentence for heresy simply because she would not take an oath. She answered all interrogations on points of faith in orthodox fashion, but, though offered her life if she would swear on the Gospels, she refused to burden her soul with the sin, and for this she was condemned as a heretic."<sup>14</sup> Modern apologists have attempted to justify this procedure. One of the most prominent, Professor Jean Guiraud of Besançon, in the recent co-operative history of *European Civilization* (IV, 360) writes: "It would serve no purpose to point out at any length how such a social code of morals undermined a society which, in the Middle Ages especially, was based upon the oath." In that last line there is some truth; oaths indeed were demanded at every turn; Rashdall points out how men were sometimes required to take an oath that they would keep their oath. But pious and orthodox contemporaries bewailed this as an apparent transgression of one of Christ's plainest commands, and as leading to constant breaches of the third Commandment. Waldo's contemporary, Petrus Cantor (i.e. Precentor of Notre-Dame-de-Paris), was among the most distinguished Churchmen in Europe; he had refused the bishopric of Tournai and (it is said) that of Paris also, and his writings were read and respected for centuries after his death. In two passages he expresses his misgivings as to what seems so plain a violation of Matthew v. 34 and James v. 12. How can we excuse (he says) the Canon Law which requires witnesses to swear, and the prelates who compel them to it? He quotes the example of that early disciple recorded by Eusebius, who answered with indignation: "I am a Christian: God forbid that I should swear!" Even though this total abstinence be a counsel of perfection, yet "why not strive after it, as we sometimes do after others?" and "why, when a man keeps that [precept of Christ], do we at once cry him down as a Catharist?" that is, as an Albigensian heretic.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, he goes on to indicate one painful consequence; namely, the

execrable blasphemies which this promiscuous swearing encourages in common talk, so that "in some princely courts it hath been forbidden, under pain of five *sols*, that any should swear by the Lord's members". Just at this time, the chronicler Guillaume le Breton was extolling Philip Augustus of France for his severity alike against heretics and against Catholic blasphemers, so many of whom "tore the Lord's body in pieces". It will be remembered that, as soon as Chaucer's Poor Parson rebuked the Host for his blasphemous tongue ("What aileth the man, so sinfully to swear?"), the former at once struck in with "I smell a Loller in the wind!" and the Shipman stoutly supported him. A generation later, we have abundant testimony from the mystic Margery Kempe of Lynn: her objection to oaths brought her more than once to the brink of the stake, especially when it became directly embarrassing to men of high estate. We read, for instance (p. 186), how the Archbishop of York "commanded his retinue to fetch a pair of fetters, and said she should be fettered, for she was a false heretic". "And there came many of the Archbishop's retinue, despising her, calling her 'Lollard' and 'heretic', and swearing many a horrible oath that she should be burnt. And she, through the strength of Jesus, spoke back to them: 'Sirs, I dread ye shall be burnt in hell without end, unless ye amend in your swearing of oaths, for ye keep not the commandments of God. I would not swear as ye do for all the money in the world.' Then they went away, as if they had been shamed." So great was the prejudice thus engendered, and so durable (as in the later case of the Quakers) that we even find St Thomas More among those who raised this essentially un-Christian outcry. In recording the Lollard Hitton's contention "that neither bishop nor pope had authority to compel him to swear," More commented that "this point" was "a false heresy" (*Eng. Works*, p. 345b).

This method of swearing (whether in the law-court or for amusement, for the two were practically inseparable in those days, as Petrus Cantor and other sources show) affords only one example of the anachronistic arguments which are so



often excogitated in defence of the Inquisition. Abailard, who is often quoted for the assertion that these heretics were political rebels, writes in fact only of their theological rebellions. If such religious nonconformity nearly always involved social conflict also in the long run, that was due quite as inevitably to the totalitarian tenets of the Church as to the restlessness of the heretics. Medieval authorities leave us in no doubt that, under the Inquisition, theological differences were in themselves sufficient to bring a man to the stake. As Abbé Vacandard puts it: "the tribunals of the Inquisition condemned not only heresies which were calculated to cause social disturbance or upheaval; they struck at all heresies *en bloc*, and at each heresy as such."<sup>16</sup> There is practically nothing that can be truly urged against the medieval heretics which we cannot parallel among the more extravagant of the early Christians. Moreover their tenets, in most cases, explicitly forbade violence and bloodshed. Many of the crimes falsely laid at their door were due, in fact, to other persons who had no religious belief whatever, and who, in those wild days, plundered orthodox churches as freely as they would have plundered heretical conventicles, if they could have found precious metals there.

Indeed, all this modern emphasis on the political and social dangers would be anachronistic, even if it were wholly true. In the mentality of all the chief medieval persecutors, religious faith completely overbalanced political conservatism. Present-day writers, even while they insist most on the medieval accusations of Bolshevism against Cathari and Waldensians, supply sometimes, quite unconsciously, the counterbalancing and decisive consideration. Mr. Hollis, the latest apologist for the Spanish Inquisition, has to deal with those many Muslims or Jews who, without real conversion, conformed outwardly under the remorseless pressure of the penal laws. Some of these men cynically sought advancement in the Church itself; and there are cases, probably authentic, of priests who went through the form of the Sacraments without either belief or intention; perhaps (as we are told in one case) with deliberate mockery in their own hearts. Concerning two such cases,

perhaps the only two which stand on record, Mr Hollis writes: "It must be clear enough to any one who has any understanding of the Catholic teaching about the Eucharist that to make mocking use of the Sacrament without belief and simply in order to gain some social advantage must, to a Catholic, seem the vilest crime of which human nature is capable. And, strange as it may seem, the evidence quite certainly proves that some *Moriscos* and *Marranos*, not content with receiving as laymen the Sacrament in which they disbelieved, actually managed to get themselves ordained priests, perhaps even bishops, and consecrators of that which they rejected. . . . Face to face with such appalling confessions, the petty point whether such men's lives were a menace to organized society sinks into insignificance. Even the awful possibility that numerous souls may have been lost through the confidence of people in the integrity of their administration of the Sacraments is of less importance than the enormous insult to God of such lives, rounded off by such confessions. The ordinary arguments for toleration of those from whom God has—or at any rate, from whom God may have—withheld the gift of faith are here irrelevant. The deed is, as Massinger said of an insult to the elevated Host, 'a deed deserving death with torture'. And few will be so foolishly sentimental as to waste time in sympathy for the fates of such wretches who continued with their blasphemies after due warning of the consequences which they would entail."<sup>17</sup> We have here the exact thirteenth-century spirit, which is too often ignored by those who insist most strongly, and most justly, upon our facing the actual mentality of that time. No doubt it is unhistorical to forget, even for one moment, that the really orthodox and earnest contemporaries of St Thomas Aquinas felt as Mr Hollis describes. But it would be no less unhistorical to ignore the other side of this medal. To an equally earnest heretic (and there were many such) that current Eucharistic adoration appeared not as the closest communion of man's soul with Almighty God, but as mistaken idolatry; so that the man who broke an image or desecrated a pyx might possess, and give plausible reasons for, exactly

the same conviction of doing God service as the priest had in burning him. We, in this age, may blame both alike, and may regard it as a form of blasphemy to claim a divine commission for destroying either a stone image in a church or God's living image in man: but the facts of history compel us to blink neither of those complementary truths. There were men on both sides who claimed to set up their own beliefs as a standard of coercion for all humanity; and, in so far as experience has shown the social defects of such presumption and such impatience, we live now in a better world. Modern compulsion, however dangerous in one country, does at least meet powerful cross-currents in others; and there seems little danger of a single uniform Reign of Terror throughout the civilized world.

Moreover Catharist asceticism, however misguided and imperfect, was not more inhuman than some of the extreme orthodoxy; and there was no more fear of its infecting the whole world than there had been in the case of the Fathers of the Desert. When we are told nowadays that Catharism deserved fire and sword because it "destroyed family life", we are at once reminded of Christ's words in Matthew x. 35 and Luke xiv. 26, and of pagan prejudice against the early Christians as "enemies of the human race". The secret abominations ascribed to heretics by their enemies were practically identical with what heathenism had attributed to the Christians of the Catacombs. It may be freely granted that neither the Cathari nor any other heretical sect of the Middle Ages bade fair to supplant successfully the Roman Church, at any rate for many generations to come. They had, in certain important respects, the crude inferiority of most revolutionaries; an inferiority which would doubtless have come out painfully, and perhaps even fatally, if they had ever become strong enough to seize the reins of government. Yet the world's experience of the last four centuries seems to show clearly that it would have been fortunate if that inferiority had been allowed to fade out by a process of natural selection, and if the thirteenth century could have had sufficient intellectual patience to tolerate rival organizations. For these

would have competed with the Church for influence over the people, and therefore would have been compelled to purge gradually their own errors, while in turn they forced upon the Christian Church that purgation for which pious and learned Churchmen had been clamouring vainly from generation to generation, and were destined to clamour, with growing despair, for centuries longer. Petrus Cantor, writing in those days when Popes were launching the wild Crusaders of the north against the Albigensians, thought of the heretics mainly as sadly misguided people who, if impenitent, might fitly be imprisoned. He protested against the common lynch-law, often encouraged by priestly ceremonies at the so-called "Judgment of God" by ordeal. "How doth the Church presume to examine by [this] foreign judgment the hearts of men? Or how is it that the Cathari are given no legitimate respite for deliberation, but are burned off-hand?" "Indeed, certain honest matrons, refusing to consent to the lust of priests of 'the seed of Canaan'\* . . . were written in the book of death and accused as Cathari. and condemned also by a certain accusing and foolish fellow in his zeal for Christian faith, while certain rich Cathari had their purses squeezed and were let go. One man alone, because he was poor and pale, and confessed the faith of Christ faithfully on all points, and put that forward as his hope, was burned, since he said to the assembled bishops that he would refuse to submit to the ordeal of hot iron unless they could first prove to him that he could do this without tempting the Lord and committing mortal sin."<sup>18</sup> It adds to this tragedy that, within a few years, Innocent forbade this very ordeal for heretics, on the explicit ground "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God", and renewed this prohibition at his Ecumenical Council.<sup>19</sup> Yet even so great and good a man as St Bernard, less than a century earlier, had no disapproval for the judgment and condemnation of heretics by that ordeal of water which was destined to play so prominent a part in witch-hunting not only before but after the Reformation.<sup>20</sup>

\* The quotation is from the Apocrypha, Daniel xiii. 56 (the story of the Chaste Susanna and the Lascivious Elders).

Unfortunately, on this general question of justice for heretics Peter's reasonable ideas were not accepted and followed up by his generation. On the contrary, the early thirteenth century gradually built up a machinery of repression which was unprecedented in world history for systematic completeness. Moreover this has never since been outdone, in theory at least, by any later despotism; although the progress of modern physical science has enabled present-day governments to surpass their predecessors in strictness of execution. The Church anticipated in discipline the Soviet-Nazi theory of Totalitarianism, just as in religion she anticipated the theory of post-Reformation Puritanism. In her theories she anticipated them; but her actions were less consistent. For good and for evil, as we shall see again and again, there was more difference between theory and practice in the medieval than in the modern world.

What, then, was this Inquisition, founded in 1230-3 by Gregory IX, the friend and patron of St Francis?

The earlier records are nearly always stories of mere lynch-law. The heretic Priscillian (385) was indeed officially tortured and executed, with six of his followers, by the Emperor Maximus; two great saints, Ambrose and Martin, protested against this, but St Leo, later, definitely justified the act; and Pope Hadrian VI, equally learned and liberal, commended it as recently as 1522.<sup>21</sup> Then, with the revival of intellectual life in Europe from about 1000, heresies naturally grew also; orthodox thought was followed by freethought, and, thenceforward, for the next century and a half, we hear more and more frequently of executions by lynch-law. It is sometimes asserted that these lynchings were discountenanced by the mass of the clergy, but never with adequate documentary proof: and, *prima facie*, it is most improbable. Of the great Churchmen some openly approved, others disapproved. But after 1150 no bishop, I believe, can be found protesting against the ever-increasing severities. Then, in 1184, Pope Lucius III created the "Episcopal Inquisition"; a system of strict official enquiry and punishments, diocese by diocese. Soon after, Innocent III sent special commissioners (*inquisi-*

tores) straight from Rome. Princes and magistrates were now commanded by the Church (under pain of excommunication, confiscation and deposition) to execute the sentences of these episcopal or papal *inquisitores*. Then Gregory IX, by his stricter laws and more elaborate organization, which had its mainspring at Rome, created the "Papal Inquisition". At this point burning now comes in, as the standard punishment for impenitent or relapsed nonconformists. The Count of Toulouse, practically a vassal of the Holy See, seems to have decreed this for his own state earlier than 1194; certainly the King of Aragon decreed it in 1197, "in obedience", he said, "to the decrees of the Holy Roman Church". Frederick II, infidel as he was, found it politic to decree it in 1224; that decree was copied into the papal register, and a batch of heretics were burned at Rome in 1231. There is a quite modern plea that Rome may be exonerated, since the Popes took these steps only in order to check imperial encroachment on ecclesiastical functions. But this, even though it were wholly true in fact, would be null in morality: it would simply mean that Gregory IX had astutely and successfully "dished the Whigs".

The tribunal of this Papal Inquisition had scarcely any real precedent, and has had scarcely any parallel in later history. Here, again, apologists plead that it had no invidious feature which cannot be matched elsewhere. That is not strictly true: Bishop Bernard Gui, one of the greatest and most honest inquisitors, confessed frankly that "*multa sunt specialia*" in its procedure. As Alphandéry puts it in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (14th ed. p. 589): "All the accused were presumed to be guilty, the judge being at the same time the accuser." The standard *Inquisitors' Directory* of the next generation, that of Eymeric, explains that, by the usual rule of law [*regulare est*], if a witness retracted his evidence and testified to the contrary, it is the earlier testimony that must stand. But the Inquisition (he explains) had here the special privilege that "since this crime [of heresy] is an exceptional matter, the judge accepts the second testimony", "wherever the presumption is that the witness testifies in zeal for the

orthodox faith"—in other words, whenever the testimony is unfavourable to the accused. Upon this passage his official commentator, Pegna, writes: "In the cause of the Faith it is a speciality that we stand by the second testimony"; "this is a concession in favour of the Faith." He claims the consent of all the orthodox authorities, and adds that, if the judge is not convinced of the probability of the man's evidence, he had better not admit it without the additional security of torture.<sup>22</sup> Nor, even though it were true that every odious detail of Inquisitional procedure can be found in some corner of the lay courts, would this plea serve its apologetic purpose. The man who thus collected so many separate details of injustice from different sources, and combined them into one organized whole, was as true an inventor as that other man who first mingled, in their due proportions, the harmless necessary salt-petre and charcoal and sulphur.

Apart from the fact that burning alive had never before been carried out in anything like this wholesale and official fashion, torture was now applied with equally unprecedented frequency and cold-blooded cruelty, not only for the accused but for witnesses also. For this, we need go no further than the *Inquisitors' Directory* of the Dominican Eymeric [1360], frequently printed at Rome under special papal approval, with commentaries by Francis Pegna, Doctor of Divinity and of Canon Law, the "last edition" dating from 1584. If torture produced nothing, it was not strictly legal to repeat it. "But if" (writes Eymeric) "having been tortured reasonably [*decenter*], he will not confess the truth, set other sorts of torments before him, saying that he must pass through all these unless he will confess the truth. If even this fails, a second or third day may be appointed to him, either *in terrorem* or even in truth, for the continuation (not repetition) of torture; for tortures may not be *repeated* unless fresh evidence emerges against him; then indeed, they may: but against *continuation* there is no prohibition." Pegna adds a warning with regard to pregnant women. Such must not be tortured, either in fact or in threat, for fear of abortion; "therefore, if the truth cannot be elicited otherwise than by

torture or terror, we must wait until she is delivered of her child."<sup>23</sup> Children below the age of puberty, or old folk, were to be less severely tortured than robust folk. Imprisonment itself was used as a regular form of torture—which indeed it might easily be, as everyone will realize who has seen a few medieval dungeons.<sup>24</sup>

We must not, it is true, lay undue stress on these cold-blooded horrors of legal phraseology, or upon the similar concrete cases which stand out from the records. Quite apart from the weight of favouritism or bribery in medieval law-courts, a few cases can be quoted, here and there, where inquisitors do forgo their pound of flesh in consideration of sex or extreme youth or age or poverty; and, in many others, they seem clearly to have done less than they might have done by the strictest application of the law. But, on the other hand, St Joan's case is far from unique in showing how much an unfair inquisitor might sometimes do to go even beyond those enormous legal powers which he wielded. And, here again, we must remember that the whole institution was far less a cause than a symptom of that ingrained intolerance which marked the whole population of Europe. Thus, although the Inquisition, in fullest form, operated in England only for a few months until Mary's accession, yet ordinary Church law, commonly backed up by the civil magistrates, sufficed to destroy the most prominent heretics and to drive the rest underground.

Under the Inquisition, no clear case of a verdict of *not guilty* seems ever to have been recorded. At best, it was *not proven*, unless the judges were able to decide that "he was convicted by false witnesses, or by unjust and malevolent folk and mortal enemies, or conspirators who afterwards repent and confess that they have falsely accused him or borne false witness against him".<sup>25</sup> Accusers were commonly sheltered by anonymity; and unfavourable, as apart from favourable, evidence was accepted even from infamous persons, or was extracted from the man's own small children. Advocates for the defence, though nominally allowed at first, soon found that the court chose to involve them in the guilt and the



punishment of their condemned clients; so that the very presence of advocacy was often dropped. The Church thus created a "justice" of her own, so elaborate in detail and so ingeniously elastic that everything was judged criminal which might seriously impede the totalitarian machine. But, for good and for evil, mankind is never consistent, and fewer were actually burned than is often supposed. Bernard Gui, one of the most active inquisitors, convicted altogether 930 heretics: he committed only 42 to the stake, 307 to prison: the rest were compelled to wear the legally prescribed badge of infamy, not only abroad but in their own homes; with other burdensome penances, and confiscation of property. We must here correct a purely modern plea, which is so boldly repeated that it threatens now to become an established legend. We are told that, out of the 930 accused before Bernard Gui, 139 were acquitted altogether, and that this is a proof of inquisitorial justice. Yet in fact it is now confessed, both tacitly and explicitly, that this assertion has rested upon a misunderstanding so gross as to be almost inexplicable. Its authors appeal to Bernard's *Register*; yet this book displays, on page after page, the plainest contrary of what has been so boldly asserted.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, every one of those 930 culprits fell, automatically, under sentence of total confiscation of property: and nobody who watches events in present-day Europe will ignore what must have been the crushing effect upon a whole population of wholesale pillage, together with imprisonment under the notoriously cruel medieval conditions, and, finally, a 4½ per cent. chance of living combustion.

Few historians of repute in any creed can now be found to plead that the Church herself was guiltless here of men's blood, and that the real responsibility rests upon those civil authorities who sent the poor wretch to the stake. That plea was discreetly, but firmly, exploded by the late Abbé Vacandard, of all modern apologists the most learned and candid, who wrote: "To reassure their consciences [the Inquisitors] tried another expedient. In abandoning heretics to the secular arm, they besought the State official to act with moderation, and avoid 'all bloodshed and all danger of death'. This was,

unfortunately, an empty formula which deceived no one. It was intended to safeguard the principle which the Church had taken for her motto: *Ecclesia abhorret a sanguine*. In strongly asserting this traditional law, the Inquisitors imagined that they thereby freed themselves from all responsibility, and kept from imbruing their hands in bloodshed. We must take this for what it is worth. It has been styled 'cunning' and 'hypocrisy'; let us call it simply a legal fiction."<sup>27</sup>

In another passage, Vacandard frankly repudiates the plea that we must consider the Inquisition rather as a bulwark against social and political unrest than against inconvenient religious beliefs. He says very truly: "It made no distinction between those teachings which entailed injury on the family and on society, and those which merely denied certain revealed truths."<sup>28</sup> The four friars burned at Marseilles in 1318 were condemned to the stake on several different counts, the principal of which was their insistence, in contradiction to Pope John XXII, that Christ and his Apostles had possessed no property of their own. The monstrous injustice of Joan of Arc's condemnation, again, was technically on purely theological grounds, however politicians might have worked behind that orthodox legal mask. St Thomas More, if things had so chanced, might as easily have been burned for maintaining with unshaken fortitude the rights of conscience against the Pope, as he was beheaded for defending those same rights against Henry VIII. Modern tolerance often listens benevolently to many apologetic pleas which will not bear the test either of psychology or of actual documentary evidence. This is especially so in Great Britain and America, where freedom of thought has brought us to an equilibrium, a centre of indifference, far removed from the whirl of Continental anticlericalism. It is natural enough that the advocates of a Church which thought and acted for so many centuries on the principles described above, and which has never yet repudiated them—nay, which can scarcely repudiate them without thereby casting overboard certain even more cherished principles—should push their apologetics to the point of demonstrable, though doubtless unintentional, *suppressio veri*

and *suggestio falsi*. It is natural, again, that historians whose struggle for impartiality, and generous natural instincts, incline them towards the under-dog, should accept these pleas with all the less suspicion because they themselves have never found time thoroughly to explore the original sources; *non omnia possumus omnes*. But these considerations throw all the greater burden of plain speech upon any student who, having devoted a good deal of time to this subject, feels that the intelligent reading public is in danger of being seriously misled on points of vital importance. Dr H. C. Lea's *Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, though often attacked in detail, has never been shaken in its main conclusions.<sup>29</sup> It has been welcomed with the highest praise by the scholars whose praise is worth most—Acton, Creighton, F. W. Maitland, Bryce. The careful reader may note with amusement how heavily the writings of Lea's severest critics are sometimes indebted to his colossal labours. Admirable handbooks, owing much to him, are to be found in Abbé Vacandard's *L'Inquisition* from one standpoint, and Professor Turberville's *Medieval Heresy and the Inquisition* from another. The deeper we look into Lea's references, with all their occasional inaccuracies, the better we shall understand why Montalembert deplored this institution as one of the most serious stumbling-blocks for those souls who are attracted to his Church;<sup>30</sup> and why Acton could write to the daughter of his friend W. E. Gladstone: "the principle of the Inquisition is murderous"; and again: "[Liberalism] swept away that appalling edifice of intolerance, tyranny, and cruelty which believers in Christ built up to perpetuate their belief. There is much to deduct from the praise of the Church in protecting marriage, abolishing slavery and human sacrifice, preventing war, and helping the poor. No deduction can be made from her evil-doing towards unbelievers, heretics, savages and witches. Here her responsibility is more undivided; her initiative and achievement more complete."<sup>31</sup>

Michelet, in his *Histoire de France*, notes a strange irony of fate in the year 1398. We then find the Emperor coming solemnly to hold a series of conferences with the King of France concerning the Papacy. The Emperor, Wenceslas, was a confirmed drunkard, and could do no business but quite early in the morning. The King, Charles VI, was seldom sane, but there was most sense in him later in the day when he had eaten and drunken. The Pope (or anti-Pope), sober and sane enough in other ways, was less sane politically, less able to listen to reason where his own power and dignity were concerned, than either the drunkard or the lunatic. For this was that Benedict XIII who finally guttered out like a spent candle 26 years later, cursing and accursed to the very last, in his little Spanish mountain fortress of Peñíscola. This strange colloquy came half-way through the Great Schism; but the same tragi-comic flavour had hung about it from the first. Indeed, if we look at the surface only, history may sometimes seem rather a comedy than a tragedy. When any change has been brewing sufficiently long, the slightest incident, or even the most ridiculous, may revolutionize the world between one day and the next. Icebergs drift southwards, no man knows how long, in the waters which gradually sap their base; until some day, in the twinkling of an eye, the vast mass turns upside down. The world-effect of the Seraievo murder, from north to south and east to west, is now tragically proverbial. And the Great Schism of the Papacy, which produced comparable results nearly six centuries ago, and did so much to herald the English Reformation, was in many of its details scarcely less comic than tragic.

First, the multitudes surging all night long under the windows of the Vatican palace, while the conclave was held, and bellowing, "A Roman, a Roman we will have!"—no

longer these French Popes at Avignon, naturally suspected of even more than their actual subservience to the policies of the Kings of France—"A Roman for Pope or at least an Italian!" Then, a hurried and nervous conclave in the early morning, ending in the definite decision to elect the Archbishop of Bari as a compromise between the irreconcilable rivalries of the two main parties. But, simultaneously, came the still more momentous vote to breakfast first before invoking the Holy Ghost and going through the legal formalities. Meanwhile, the mob breakfasted too; they broke into the papal cellars; and soon, inspired on their side by Bacchus, they clamoured to come and salute that Roman Pope who, by this time, must surely have been elected. The cardinals feared to confess frankly that they were compromising upon this archbishop; that they intended an Italian, indeed, but no Roman; not even a cardinal; only a comparatively obscure monk from the south. The more these cardinals shuffled, the more furiously the mob raged, and burst into the hall. Then one cardinal found a ready lie: "The Cardinal of St Peter's is Pope!" The crowd rushed to this Cardinal of St Peter's, who was a real Roman; and amidst that confusion the liar with his brother-cardinals slipped off. This poor supposititious Pope was aged and infirm, and it was only when they had nearly wrung his gouty hands off that the crowd began at last to accept his protests, and to realize that, if there was any real Pope-elect, he was the Archbishop of Bari. Then it was almost the story of that Djinn of the *Arabian Nights*, after the unsuspecting fisherman had released him from his bottle; the mob rushed from room to room in search of the archbishop, whom they would willingly have lynched. At last the tumult was appeased; and, then, some days later, most of the scattered cardinals were collected to ratify their informal choice. The Archbishop of Bari took the name of Urban VI; and there was no reason why all should not have gone well, if only this Urban had been either a better man or a worse. The honour turned his head; he betrayed at once all the proverbial vices of a beggar on horseback. He was, in

Creighton's words, "a short, stout man, with a swarthy face, full of Neapolitan fire and savagery. His monkish piety burned to distinguish itself by some striking measures of reform; but he was without knowledge of himself or of the world, and knew nothing of the many steps to be taken between good intentions and their practical execution. He thought that he could enforce his will by self-assertion, and that the Cardinals could be reduced to absolute obedience by mere rudeness."<sup>1</sup> The luxury of the cardinals had long been a byword; indeed, it was their anxiety for their silver plate which had complicated their fear of the mob during this election. Urban tried to reform this offensive luxury, but his only idea of reform was to treat them like schoolboys. We have the fullest information on all these little details from the pen of his intimate secretary, Dietrich von Nieheim. Urban had no sense of dignity: he descended to personal abuse with his cardinals, and even offered to strike one of them. He was no less offensive to the Queen and the heir-apparent of Naples. The Duke of Brunswick himself, who captained the Pope's bodyguard, suggested that he should be called not *Urbanus* but *Turbanus*, the Disturber. So the French cardinals revolted, and elected a French Pope, Clement VII; and, though modern historians are fairly unanimous in favour of Urban's lawful election, Christendom languished for 51 years under what may truly be called Papal Paralysis. Catharine of Siena, the greatest saint of the period, was convinced that Urban was Pope beyond all serious question. But the Spanish St Vincent Ferrer wrote, with all reinforcement of scholastic logic, in the exactly contrary sense. All supporters of Urban (he argued) are in mortal sin, doomed to hell in default of repentance, unless they are so ignorant and unlearned that they have never heard the reasons advanced by the French cardinals. He pitilessly brushes aside the objection "that very many devout persons, clergy and monks and nuns, and many princes and doctors are on Urban's side". This, he argues, is a mere snare of the Devil; if the first Christians had taken notice of the mass of good people who clung to paganism,

the world would never have been converted.<sup>2</sup> That which St Vincent demonstrated with all the learning of the schools was reinforced by the feminine enthusiasm of Ste Colette; so that, in those days, there was a preponderance of saints in favour of that Pope whose claim is practically abandoned nowadays by the later and less partial judgment of historians of all schools. Nor can we wonder at the impossibility of arriving at any clear decision, in those days when decision mattered most to the Church. In the face of what is known concerning the haphazard development of papal claims and election methods, the Great Schism must appear less as an accident than as a perfectly natural result. It is absurd to treat it, with certain modern writers, as a stroke of sheer ill-luck falling upon an innocent and unsuspecting Church. Yet this plea is sometimes so stressed that we may say, almost without exaggeration, that we are asked to visualize the Schism as a regrettable miscalculation on the part of Divine Providence.

Saints, then, were irreconcilably divided, and decision came ultimately from the politicians. All through the Schism, the cleavage ran almost entirely on nationalistic lines, as Creighton brings out most clearly in detail. The final settlement came with that Council of Constance which, after the model of the University of Paris, voted by "nations", and which, as Figgis puts it, "first [in all Europe] exhibited the conflict of pure politics on the grand scale".<sup>3</sup> England (since the Hundred Years' War was still raging) was naturally against the French Pope, just as Scotland, at war with us, was naturally on his side. And the first English heresiarch, Wyclif, was earlier distinguished as politician than as reformer, when John of Gaunt brought him forward to repudiate with decisive directness the Pope's claim for tribute (1374). Then, in 1377, he was summoned before a council at St Paul's, to answer the archbishop and assembled prelates upon a charge of teaching the errors of Marsilius of Padua.

Thus this comedy, almost this farce, of the election in Rome and the cardinals' breakfast and the papal beggar-on-horse-back developed into one of the great tragedies of European history; and we see here the nemesis of those ever-growing

and disproportionate pretensions of the Holy See. In insisting so strongly upon papal autocracy, the Popes had scarcely reckoned with the dangers which this involved for Catholicism itself. By narrowing down the idea of the Church first to the clergy, and then to this single Head of the clergy (for it is hardly an exaggeration to say that Boniface's bull *Unam Sanctam* outdoes even the "L'État, c'est moi" of Louis XIV), they rendered the whole institution singularly vulnerable to the changes and chances of this mortal life. As we have seen, they thus tempted the King of France to try to put the Church in his pocket, by reducing the Pope to a position of political dependence upon the French crown. They exposed the Papacy to all the worst disadvantages of an absolute monarchy: a monarchy more aggressive in principle than solid at its foundation. The Schism now gave consistency, flesh and blood, to many hitherto fluid heretical tendencies.

For it is difficult to accept the plea sometimes put forward, that obstinate heretics, after all, were rare in the Middle Ages. It is quite true that England, as compared with many parts of the Continent, was long orthodox. Just as we hear little of formal heresy in all Europe, until the revival of thought in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, so in our own corner of Europe heresy was almost dormant until we began to catch up our more advanced neighbours. That Latin verse of Boccaccio says no more than the truth: "Hispanus et Gallus, studiis tardusque Britannus". In book-learning, the average Briton was a dunce compared with the Spaniard and Frenchman, still more when we compare him with the Italian of Boccaccio's time. We find learned laymen in France before 1200, and a fourteenth-century king, Charles V, who collected such a library and organized such methodical translations as England never saw till printing came. As we have seen, no English layman equalled Dante in learning until St Thomas More. Even that school of mysticism, which flourished among us in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, was far more pietistic and devotional than learned or philosophical.

Enquiry, therefore, was long dormant except among a few



scholars who wrote quite over the heads of the multitude. Even our great Schoolmen, the glory of Oxford, studied and taught more at Paris than at home : there is little evidence for Oxonian freethought under the surface, such as we find in France and Italy. Again, we had not the busy foreign trade which, elsewhere, made men exchange ideas as well as wares; our merchants were stay-at-homes compared with those of many great Continental cities. Finally, it was not until the verge of the Reformation that English capitalism came near to its Continental development. Sedentary operatives, herded together, form proverbially the best soil for the crumbs of revolutionary ideas which drop from the highbrows' tables above them; yet all England put together could probably not have shown so many weavers as the single city of Ypres had, with its roll of more than 3000; moreover, Ypres itself was certainly outdone by Ghent and Florence. Nor, again, had we anything like those traditions of keen discussion which distinguished Florence as early as Dante's day. Even the Londoner of the Middle Ages, with all his sterling qualities, was comparatively slow-witted.

Here, however, we are confronted with a paradox which, thrown out by one brilliant journalist, is sometimes repeated seriously even by historians. Mr G. K. Chesterton once wrote : " Never in the whole history of the world did so many people believe so firmly in so many things, the authority for which they could not test, as do Londoners to-day."<sup>4</sup> Here would seem to lurk three gross fallacies. In the first place, the complexity of modern life compels the Londoner to face a multitude of ideas, right or wrong, out of all proportion to those of the medieval peasant, the narrow simplicity of whose life forms one of its greatest attractions for modern romance. The ideas thus forced upon him are probably at least tenfold as numerous, perhaps even a hundredfold; yet he has not ten times more hours in the day for pause and verification. Since we are dealing with ancient times, it may not be too trivial to quote an ancient quip : Why do white sheep eat so much more than black? The answer, of course, is as incon-

testably true as the fundamental implication of the question is foolish. White sheep eat more than black because there are so many more of them. The modern Londoner has so many more ideas unverified, because he has more ideas altogether.

Secondly, again, the modern Londoner does in fact verify a larger proportion of his ideas than this cynical observation would imply. Complete verification is possible to none of us, not even to the greatest expert; in the large majority of cases we can but roughly test the authority upon which we accept any statement. This testing the average Londoner performs very imperfectly, perhaps, but at least far more fully than his medieval ancestor. He knows that a great many false assertions and false claims are current; but he knows also (competition being such as it is, and young critics so healthily eager to correct their seniors) that we may generally trust the scientist, the lawyer, and the doctor to be right in the main. Our Londoner has never seen a bacillus; but he could give an incomparably more accurate account of the causes of typhoid than could have been given by the medieval expert, let alone by those patients who, on the strength of that expert's astrological calculations, believed themselves to be smitten from the stars.

And, thirdly, the importance of these things believed without full examination by the modern Londoner would seem incomparably smaller than in the Middle Ages. If the modern man "believes in nothing higher than the roof of his own house", that is no more than St Bernardino tells us, in so many words, concerning citizens in his own fifteenth-century Italy. At least he no longer believes in one thing which he cannot test; namely, the horrible eschatology which hypnotized even the greatest among medieval philosophers and theologians. A whole outlook upon life depends upon the conception of God's justice implied in that medieval doctrine; and the modern world can here give far better reasons for its unbelief in the hell of the Middle Ages than St Thomas Aquinas himself could have given for belief. Ninety per cent. of our medieval population was then agricultural; and

we have no evidence that these men—or even their professional teachers, the ordinary parish clergy—set themselves to verify anything whatever except things that lay under their nose. Above these, the very greatest intellects, the very coryphaei of medieval philosophy, were withheld almost inescapably from verifying some of the fundamental traditions upon which their whole scheme of this life and of eternity reposed. They were restrained not only by potential prison and stake in the background but, in the cast of the best of them, by Lord Acton's feeling: "My religion is dearer to me than life." We are no more justified in judging medieval heresy superficially, on the statistics of its open manifestations, than we should be in emphasizing the fact that, in modern Totalitarian States, obstinate nonconformists form only an infinitesimal fraction of the total population. One of the ablest of pacifist philosophers, Bertrand Russell, is justly emphatic against the delusion that persecution never pays, or that it pays for no longer than a generation or two. The cold judicial murder of one man, approved or tolerated by the multitude, may well reduce a million more to silence and passivity. Moreover, in countless cases it even changes men's minds; so strongly do the majority always live under the sway of exterior impressions.

On the Continent there had already been heresiarchs of the first water. Arnold of Brescia, in St Bernard's days, had preached against clerical opulence, and clerical power in politics, with an energy and success which at one time threatened revolution in the great cities. With the dawn of the fourteenth century came that Pierre Dubois who, working for the French King, insisted that the Popes were responsible for more wars than they prevented, since they meddled everywhere yet had not sufficient physical force to decide the conflict anywhere without a network of alliances and diplomatic shifts. Soon after this, Marsilius of Padua applied to the papal problem all the political solvents which had been developed in those highly civilized and restless cities of Northern Italy, together with that current of scepticism which ran so

strongly under the surface in his Universities of Padua and Paris. He was still too much a man of his own age, or just possibly too prudent, to expose the whole fraud of those False Decretals which, though not invented in the papal chancery, had been so fruitfully exploited by the Popes of the last four centuries. Yet, even in that field, his historical sense did expose at least one part of this mass of falsehood, the so-called Clementine Constitutions, with a directness which no modern scholar has ever dared to contest: for, after all, historical sense is merely the application to historical records of the natural qualities and the business methods which make for success in every department of life. And, most important of all, he revolutionized Bible interpretation by applying to it that same historical sense. He showed how little the New Testament supports the medieval Petrine claims; how thoroughly imaginative and artificial are those later glosses upon the sacred text which would construct on those tottering foundations a whole palace of Petrine despotism and of divine authority granted to the clergy over the laity, with its corollary of enormous wealth and privileged protection against ordinary law. He demanded disendowment of all superfluities, with State authority of the Church, and control to be exercised over all the weightiest things and persons, Pope included, by an ecclesiastical assembly which should be a real parliament of Christendom. The Franciscan William of Ockham, who joined in this rebellion and was involved in the same papal anathema, even suggested that women should have votes for such a council, since its one essential function was to further the salvation of souls, and women have souls as well as men. Dubois had already gone some way in that direction: the first, perhaps, to venture so far since the Arab Averroës of 150 years earlier. But, the Church organization itself being so fundamentally political, it was as impossible for these as for other reformers to start a purely spiritual movement, even if that had been their natural character and their whole desire. Both Marsilius and Ockham became strong partisans in the violent quarrel between Pope John XXII and

the Emperor Louis the Bavarian, and neither attracted in his own day anything like the political attention which he has since enjoyed. Yet a generation afterwards, in 1377, our own Oxford philosopher John Wyclif was summoned to appear at St Paul's, before the archbishop and assembled bishops, on the charge of teaching the heresies of Marsilius : and that opened a new chapter in our Church history.

### 37. THE LOLLARDS

The tardy and crude beginnings of English heresy are clearly traced by Mr H. G. Richardson in *The English Historical Review* (Jan. 1936). He shows how, before Wyclif's trial in 1377, only 16 definite cases of heresy can be counted. Yet, in 1382 parliament complained that unlicensed preachers went about the country disseminating heresies and notorious errors, some of which were calculated to "cause discord and dissensions among the different estates of the realm"; errors for which they contrived to get the support of the populace. Here, as Mr Richardson points out, we have partly "the aftermath of the Peasants' Revolt" of 1381. This parliamentary complaint was met by a statute which gave sheriffs and other sufficient magistrates power to arrest and imprison such preachers and their supporters, if any prelate certified them to the chancellor as guilty. For, by this time, those heretical potentialities which had been fluid (so to speak) in the rapidly awaking England of Chaucer's day, had crystallized round one strong and commanding figure.<sup>1</sup>

John Wyclif had risen to the front rank in Oxford philosophy before he was brought forward as a politician; and, even then, it was only by a further development that he became heretic and reformer. Both in himself and in the development of his teaching he may be called characteristically English. By nature he was severe and ascetic; in later life he confessed himself to have erred on the side of harsh judgment and bitterness in controversy. Yet the root of this was moral; at bottom, he was a typical Puritan. His philosophy was a compromise; his moderate realism was unpopular in an academic world in which Ockham's pronounced nominalism reigned in spite of papal condemnation: hence his small philosophic vogue on the Continent, and the practical extinction of his Latin writings abroad, except among the Hussites

of Bohemia. Unlike Dubois and Marsilius and Ockham, he appealed at an early stage to the people. His spirit was that of the dialogue which Carlyle took as a motto for the title page of *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. Says one, with detached resignation, "Well, well, God mend all!" "Nay, by God, Donald, but we must help Him to mend it."

That first trial of 1377, nominally theological, was at root rather political; the bishops were resolved to strike down this priestly ally of John of Gaunt and his anticlerical party. It ended in a brawl between Gaunt and Courtenay, and the council broke up in confusion. Three months later, the Pope issued five bulls condemning certain of Wyclif's doctrines and demanding his imprisonment; but his personal popularity and Gaunt's protection rendered these inoperative. Next year came the Great Schism, which changed Wyclif from a critic of the Papacy to a determined opponent.

And not Wyclif alone: for its effect upon all thinking men was devastating. For centuries, Popes had claimed to judge practically everywhere in European politics and in social, even domestic, life, on the logical plea that their commission descended directly from God, through that disciple to whom Christ had given the Keys of Heaven, with a promise of unshaken victory over the Gates of Hell. In that unbreakable bond (pious souls believed) the world was safe; and even those who felt most strongly that, in practice, the Court of Rome was a nest of abuses, were often willing to accept the excuse that God's treasure is providentially contained in earthen vessels, that even among the twelve was one Judas, and other current pleas of the same sort. Now, however, in which of these two earthen vessels—or in which of the three, for to that it came before the Schism was ended—was God's unerring judgment and indefectible spiritual care contained? Was Urban the true son of Peter, and Clement of Judas (as St Catharine held), or *vice versa* (as St Vincent insisted)? Was half of Christendom really in mortal sin? (for from this there seemed no logical escape) and, if so, which half? It was the old problem of the Three Rings: so long as any dispute remained among the rivals, how could any one be

genuine? It was not yet realized, of course, that this paralysis would last for nearly forty years, and (in a milder form) even to the present day, since there has never been any official decision between the Italian and the Franco-Spanish line, and succeeding Popes, Urbans and Clements and Benedicts, have named themselves as if Urban VI, Clement VII, and Benedict XIII had all been rightful pontiffs; which, of course, is impossible. But, even from the first, the dilemma was cruel enough. The uncertainty of papal succession, and therefore of inspiration, was so obviously the only absolute certainty in the whole affair, that orthodox and unorthodox agree in regarding this as one of the gravest events of the Middle Ages.

Wyclif had already argued—and this was the reason for coupling him with Marsilius—for strong measures of clerical disendowment. His famous book *Of Civil Lordship* was mainly founded on the teaching of his Oxford master, the Archbishop of Armagh; but he carried his logic farther than the master ever did in fact, or would have been likely ever to do. The book, like so much of medieval political and even religious theory, rests upon feudal foundations. *Lordship*, to begin with, has the double sense of *authority* and *ownership*: the *dominus* of a manor, for instance, was lord of the serf's person and landlord of his little holding. God is the Universal *Dominus* of the universe; no man holds anything but as a feudal grant, a *beneficium*, from Him. But every *beneficium* implies corresponding service. Therefore, in strict logic, bad men have rightful possession of nothing. They may be in present enjoyment of many things; but that is only by usurpation; even if these things had ever been rightfully theirs, they have forfeited that right by neglecting the corresponding service. Here we have socialism; but Wyclif, it may fairly be said, anticipated the Fabian compromise. In theory, the wicked *dominus* is a usurper; but in practice the designs of Providence are best secured by refusing to dispossess him too hastily, at the cost of a revolution which would do more harm than good. In this sense (said Wyclif) "God must obey the Devil"; an epigram which was naturally



exploited against him by his theological enemies. He looked forward to a time when the Church might be compelled to yield up her superfluous wealth to the poor. By a later extension, he would even give some of the money to "poor knights", who should be taxed for poor relief, and would thus give to Church money more liberal circulation than at present. But, at bottom, what most concerns Wyclif is to show the theoretical unsoundness of the far-reaching ecclesiastical claim of immunity. We may well be compelled to leave the Church alone for the present; the prelate, for a while, shall still retain *dominus* in practice; but, when he claims this *dominium* as his right, there he is talking of what does not exist; it would be a just stroke of God's hand if anyone should take from him "even that which he seemeth to have". Again, although Wyclif alone among the Schoolmen had expressed disapproval of serfdom on moral grounds, yet there is no sign of his sympathy with the actual rebels of 1381, nor did they claim his support. On the other hand, we cannot altogether dissociate him from John Ball's teaching. These ideas were now in the air; and, if that hedge-preacher had caught nothing directly from this philosopher, yet the agreement of the rough practitioner with the subtle theorist is none the less significant.

Into a mind like Wyclif's, thus disposed already, the news of the Schism fell like a spark upon gunpowder. Hitherto, his scorn had been mainly poured upon the semi-clerical politician-bishops; for such were the majority in his day. Now he was confronted also with the warrior-bishop, Despenser of Norwich, who wasted English lives and treasure in a "crusade" for Urban's cause in France; a purely nationalistic raid upon our ancient enemies, which failed as miserably as it deserved to fail.

Briefly, Wyclif went on from heresy to heresy. Penance and Confession were good if voluntary, but antichristian if compulsory. Purgatory did indeed exist; but Masses for the dead, and papal Indulgences, were a delusion. Image-worship was not necessarily evil, but its current excesses were. At last, he went on to deny Transubstantiation: more and more

he had broken with the Papacy and the Sacraments. He set up no formal system to replace what he destroyed. He preached nothing more systematic than an insistence on the Bible as the foundation of Christianity, and upon the necessity of preaching to the ignorant masses, whether by priests or by "lay readers", and upon instruction by pamphlets in the mother-tongue. Here again we may take a hint from the great historian Michelet, too good a Frenchman in his day to be otherwise than severely critical of the English, yet too clear-sighted and honest to deny us our own virtues here and there. Commenting on the French failures in North America, and the final occupation of Canada by the English, he suggests one significant cause. The Frenchman, abroad, tended far more to mingle with the native population: a race of Creoles sprang up wherever he went. Again, in those days he was normally a practising Catholic, dependent upon his priest and his Sacraments; yet priests and Sacraments were seldom to be found there in the wilds. The Englishman, on the other hand, could carry his own atmosphere with him everywhere; he was self-sufficient "*avec sa Bible et son Anglaise*"; a truth not the less striking for the delicately contemptuous flavour of those last two words.

In Wyclif's case, as in the contemporary Peasants' Revolt, we may find a testimonial to the comparative order and spirit of compromise in England. It cannot be said that the clergy as a whole were specially vindictive. Archbishop Sudbury was very loth to proceed against Wyclif at all: indeed Sudbury was not only a pacific man but something of a broad-churchman; he had publicly expressed doubts as to the general utility of the Canterbury Pilgrimage; and, when the rebels cut off his head in 1381, some good churchfolk saw therein the work of Providence. Even his successor Courtenay, who was a fighting prelate, did no more in this case than his office demanded from him; Wyclif was never personally molested, but died quietly in his own country parish of Lutterworth (1384). Much of this impunity was certainly due to the sympathy felt for him by a large section of Englishmen. The monastic chronicler of Leicester is doubtless exag-

gerating when he tells us that "every second man one met upon the way" was a Lollard; but unquestionably a large proportion of the population was more or less sympathetic. Gaunt protected him in 1377: but next year it was Gaunt's personal enemy, the Black Prince's widow, who stood between Wyclif and his condemnation by the bishops. Moreover the London citizens, for whom Gaunt was the most hated enemy, were among the heretic's warmest supporters. At Oxford, the theological Faculty itself backed him up until his denial of Transubstantiation; and, even after this, a hostile chronicler admits that "the flower of the university" stood by him; and the publication of the archbishop's sentence against him caused something like a riot there in 1382. For here was neither, on the one hand, a mere doctrinaire, who had lived in books and expected to be able to make a new world after his own bookish and academical fashion. Nor, on the other, was this the mere common-sense man, doing his own job in life excellently by rule of thumb, and expecting to solve wider problems after the same simple downright fashion. Wyclif was one who united high abstract speculation with practical experience, and could see where theory and rule of thumb agreed; one whose doctrines had grown out of his environment, and who therefore revealed to the Englishmen of his time the hitherto only half-conscious needs of their environment. His weakest point, perhaps, was that asperity which he himself confessed publicly with regret. But the world in which he lived was provocative of asperity. It would be possible to compile a catena of criticisms by the most exceptionally orthodox Churchmen, from St Bernard and St Bonaventura down to the official memorials compiled to help the Popes for the two Councils of Lyons in 1245 and 1274, and that of Vienne in 1311, which would rival, or possibly even outdo, a similar catena from Wyclif's works in their condemnation of existing abuses, and their cry for reform. But this Englishman was the first man of outstanding talents, learning, and moral character who saw straight into the practical solution of the problem. He realized, as some at least of those others would probably have realized if they had lived

on into those days when hopes deferred had made the heart sick, that the hierarchy was essentially incapable of reforming itself, and that the pressure must come from without; from the laity, in some form or other.

Lollardy, thus born, had a long life before it. It is beside the point to argue, as even so careful a scholar as the late Dr Gairdner did, that we can trace no direct connection between Wyclif and the final Reformation because Wyclif knew nothing of Luther's pet doctrine of Justification by Faith, nor Luther of Wyclif's Dominion theory. The real kernel of the Reformation, doctrinally, was a conviction of the soul's direct responsibility to God; the comparative irrelevance of human mediators and of traditional forms. That conviction grew from generation to generation. Not only did Dr Gairdner write in ignorance of Lollard trials which have since been published, but he ignored, still more fatally, the fact that such a movement as this is not killed by being driven underground, and that other causes besides early Christianity have had their Church of the Catacombs. The House of Commons more than once showed anticlerical tendencies; there was even one session in which it earned the nickname of the Lollard Parliament. But the alliance with politicians, and the exaggerations which naturally mark every movement such as this, culminated in Sir John Oldcastle's rebellion and ruined Lollardy as an open party. Mr Richardson traces the course of repressive legislation from stage to stage.<sup>2</sup> The Church had long possessed one weapon in the writ *De excommunicato capiendo* (otherwise, *Significavit*), by which the sheriff, on receiving notice from a bishop that X was excommunicated and had remained obdurate for 40 days, was bound to arrest and imprison him "until he had made his peace with Holy Church". But this was a slow process, depending much on the whole-hearted co-operation of the civil courts: and the canonist Bishop Lyndwood shows how obstructive (in his view) the latter were, and how favourable to excommunicates. Therefore the petition of 1382, with its attempt to implicate the Lollards in the Peasants' Revolt, demanded stronger measures against these turbulent preachers who stole the

support of the populace. So a statutory commission was devised by which, whenever any bishop reported X to the chancellor as a condemned heretic, every royal minister, and, indeed, every subject, must forthwith obey and arrest the man, whose only chance then lay in an appeal to the King's Council. This, however, did not prevent the spread of heretical opinions; so a fresh step was taken in 1388, again conditioned mainly by a political revolution. Commissioners were appointed in every county to search for heretical books and to suppress heresy: sheriffs and other royal officers were to assist. It will be noted how definitely, by each of these statutes, the final fate of the accused is kept in lay hands. "The government was, perhaps, not entirely disinterested: the heretic's possessions might be forfeit, and this was held out as a threat, though under Richard II such a penalty seems never to have been exacted." All this while, although many Lollards were taken, none was burnt. The State was sometimes held out as a menace, and Despenser, the warrior-bishop, threatened "fire and sword" to heretical preachers in his diocese: but, hitherto, this was known to Englishmen only because it was common enough overseas. Now, however, in answer to a Lollard manifesto of 1395, the clergy formally demanded the institution of the death penalty. The Pope, having received a copy of the manifesto, pressed stronger repressive measures upon Richard and the two archbishops, and, among others, upon the mayor and sheriffs of London. Then, in 1397, all the bishops petitioned for the execution of impenitent heretics "as in other realms subject to the Christian religion". But Richard issued no such statute, and no heretic was yet burned.

Then, in 1401 came Henry IV, owing his throne greatly to Church support and naturally disposed to stand by his allies. Though Sautre, the first Lollard martyr, may have been burned shortly before the passing of Henry's act *De haeretico comburendo*, yet the fatal writ was issued "by the King himself and his Council in Parliament", and Mr Richardson adds truly "the reference in the writ to divine, human and canon laws does not alter the fact that these had

no currency in England except by assent of King and Parliament". For the clergy, Roman Canon Law was a final authority, but the lay lords never accepted that principle. When, in 1405, the clergy granted subsidies to Henry IV on condition of his prosecuting heresy, they made no attempt to secure that principal rôle which their brethren had long played on the Continent. Therefore the Papal Inquisition never operated among us between that slight and momentary concession by Edward II and the reign of Mary Tudor. From one point of view, it tells against Lollardy that the Inquisition was less sorely needed among us, and that, after Oldcastle's rebellion, it had no chance with King and Parliament. But, though this shows how no prominent man could be an open Lollard and live, yet it throws the greater stress upon the fundamental reality of a movement which could run so continuously and increasingly underground among simple common folk. Moreover, it cannot be forgotten that the Bohemian Hussites, who so strongly influenced later Church history, were themselves under the influence of Wyclif. There is, therefore, not only rhetoric but fact in the passage where Thomas Fuller describes the execution of that damnatory decree of the Council of Constance, 41 years after Wyclif's death.<sup>3</sup> "In obedience hereunto, Richard Fleming, bishop of Lincoln . . . sent his officers . . . to ungrave him accordingly. To Lutterworth they come, Sumner, Commissary, Official, Chancellor, Proctors, Doctors, and the servants— . . . take what was left out of the grave, and burn them to ashes, and cast them into Swift, a neighbouring brook running hard by. Thus this brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon in Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wickcliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."

### 38. THE BLACK DEATH<sup>1</sup>

This terrible pestilence, which is perhaps the worst visitation in all recorded history, has lent itself in our day to a great deal of exaggeration and special pleading; it is frequently invoked as a *deus ex machina* to explain inconvenient facts away. But, when all exaggerations have been discounted, it still remains one of the most important events of our whole period. In this chapter, I shall deal mainly with its effects upon men's world-outlook in England.

Doctors are now agreed that this was the bubonic plague, coming from the East, and carried by fleas and rats, of which there was no lack in medieval Europe. Medieval medicine was naturally powerless to diagnose anything so dependent upon steady and microscopic observation; the plague was therefore often attributed secondarily to planetary influences, and primarily to God's anger against the special wickedness of the age. The Leicester cloisterer Knighton writes: "In those days [1348] there arose a huge rumour and outcry among the people, because when tournaments were held, almost in every place, a band of women would come as if to share the sport, dressed in divers and marvellous dresses of men—sometimes to the number of 40 or 50 ladies, of the fairest and comeliest (though I say not, of the best) among the whole kingdom. Thither they came in party-coloured tunics, one colour or pattern on the right side and another on the left, with short hoods that had pendants like ropes wound round their necks, and belts thickly studded with gold or silver—nay, they even wore, in pouches slung across their bodies, those knives which are called *daggers* in the vulgar tongue; and thus they rode on choice war-horses or other splendid steeds to the place of tournament. There and thus they spent and lavished their possessions, and wearied their bodies with fooleries and wanton buffoonery, if popular

report lie not. . . . But God in this matter, as in all others, brought marvellous remedy; for He harassed the places and times appointed for such vanities by opening the floodgates of heaven with rain and thunder and lurid lightning, and by unwonted blasts of tempestuous winds. . . . That same year and the next came the general mortality throughout the world."<sup>2</sup> So, again, in *Piers Plowman*, Reason "proved that these pestilences were for pure sin, and the south-west wind on Saturday at even [January 15th, 1362] was for pure pride, and no point else".<sup>3</sup> Knighton records another story which, even if it be pure invention, points clearly to the same mentality. "The King of Tharsis, seeing so sudden and unheard of a mortality among his subjects, set out with a great multitude of nobles towards Avignon to the Pope; for he purposed to be baptized a Christian, believing that God's vengeance had fallen upon his people by reason of their evil lack of faith. But, after twenty days' journey, hearing that the plague wrought as great havoc among Christians as among other nations, he turned and went no farther on that way, but hastened home unto his own country: and the Christians, falling upon the rear of his host, slew some 2000 of them."<sup>4</sup> We have here the natural nemesis of those popular superstitions which so often relied upon charms and spells to propitiate the Deity. Bede had told, long ago, how many folk attributed the Yellow Pest of the seventh century to the anger of the old Teutonic gods, and to the impotence of the Cross as a talisman against suffering. He wrote: "Sighere, and very many of the people and of the earls, loving this life and not seeking another, or even not believing it to exist, began to restore the pagan temples which had been forsaken, and to worship images, as if by means of these they could be shielded from the mortality."<sup>5</sup>

The plague reached Europe in 1347, breaking out at Constantinople. Thence it followed the trade route, by Messina and Genoa, to Normandy. In August 1348 the Bishop of Bath and Wells ordered processions throughout his diocese, every Friday, "to beg God to protect the people from the pestilence which had come from the east into the neighbour-



ing kingdom [of France] ". He gave an Indulgence of 40 days to all who should give alms, or fast, or pray to avert God's anger. In January 1349 he is again circularizing his diocese.<sup>6</sup> "The contagion of pestilence of this modern time, spreading everywhere, hath left many parish churches and other cures of Our diocese, and the parishioners thereof, without curate and priest; and, since priests cannot be found who for zeal of devotion or for any stipend are willing to undertake the care of the places aforesaid, and to visit the sick and minister ecclesiastical sacraments to them (perchance by reason of the infection and the horror of contagion), therefore, many, as we have heard, are dying without the Sacrament of Penance, not knowing how they should act at such a point of necessity, and believing that, even in case of need, no other confession of their sins is profitable or meritorious except when made to a priest who beareth the keys of the Church." Therefore the bishop enjoins them, in the last resort, to confess even to layfolk, who however must keep the seal of secrecy inviolate; moreover, if the penitent survive, he must repeat his confession later to a priest. If there be no priest to administer extreme unction, then, "as in other matters, faith in the Sacrament should suffice". Here, then, we already find a temporary revolution in the medieval Church: faith must take the place of the Sacrament, not only here and there, but among the multitude; and the parallel revolution in all social relations is fully described by Boccaccio in his famous prologue to the *Decameron*.

There are six points upon which all the chroniclers agree. (1) The unprecedented mortality: though, as to the actual figures, they are often as random as we are accustomed to expect from medieval computations. Some put the mortality at nearly 90 per cent.; an entry in the Norwich records (written 150 years after the event) gives more than 57,000 deaths among a population which pretty certainly never exceeded 17,000 and was in all likelihood considerably less. But most writers put it at about 50 per cent.; and, as we shall see, this is not very far wrong. (2) The suddenness and the helplessness: no efficient remedy, and no means of escape.

(3) The consequent loosening of all social ties, whether of family or of parish. (4) The extremes of faith and unfaith during the pestilence. (5) The root cause, extreme sinfulness in that particular age. (6) Yet, afterwards, a still greater hardness of heart. In those last two we may trace the usual medieval mirage; the usual conviction that mankind was going steadily from bad to worse as time went on.

So much for the literary sources, let us now check these by comparison with official documents and similar records.

Mr J. Lunn obtained the degree of Ph.D. at Cambridge in 1930 with a thesis on the Black Death, full of valuable statistics. There, for the first time, the whole evidence from the episcopal registers is analysed and tabulated; and, with his permission, I am making free use here of his statistics. We may begin with the bishops, whose movements he has traced carefully all through. He shows that there was little difference between their behaviour during the plague and at ordinary times; there was "little to differentiate"; "business went on as usual". In so far as there was a difference, they spent less time than usual in their cathedral cities or any other town, staying longer at their secluded country manors. They ordained clerics as usual, and instituted priests into the many livings vacated by death: but this needed not to involve much personal contact. The mortality among them was less than 18 per cent., as against more than 40 per cent. among the parish clergy.<sup>7</sup>

Let us pass on to these beneficed clergy. Here again Dr Lunn's statistics are of great value, for they exploit fully for the first time the unrivalled riches of the English ecclesiastical records, which yield us numerical certainties far beyond those of any other country, and which, by analogy, cast welcome light on the incidence of this plague throughout Europe. As might be expected, the differences between one comparatively small area and another are startling. Taking the rural deaneries, deaths vary enormously. Leyland deanery, in Lichfield diocese, had none; the next lowest is Ludlow deanery (Hereford) which had only 12. Thence we rise by degrees to the three extremes at the other end; 75 deaths in Ross and in

Irchenfield (Hereford both) and 86 in Kenn (Exeter). Yet, when we pass beyond these narrow limits, and take so large an area as a diocese, those irregularities cancel each other out so nearly that, while the lowest diocese is York with 38.97 deaths per cent., the highest are Exeter, Winchester and Norwich with 48.8 each, and Ely with 48.5. The intervening dioceses are Lichfield (39.6), Lincoln (40.1), Hereford (43.2), Worcester (44.5) and Bath and Wells (47.6). Moreover, these differences seem to some extent explicable. It was natural that York, with so many moorland parishes and so sparse a village population over the whole diocese, should suffer comparatively little; Lichfield, again, included all the hills and moorlands of Derbyshire and most of the Midland forests. Norwich diocese, on the other hand, was far more thickly populated, and had four cities of the first rank; Winchester, again, had Southampton, which we know to have suffered very heavily, and Southwark. Again, the separate study of the different deaneries suggests to Dr Lunn that navigable rivers and estuaries did much to disseminate the plague, which we know to have been ship-borne from the first, and which would certainly flourish among folk so closely herded together in their daily work. But, be that as it may, it is a remarkable testimonial to the truth of these statistics that, in the broader generalization of entire dioceses, the percentages should agree so closely. It seems now quite certain that nearly half of the beneficed clergy died during these plague months.

But, though we may accept Dr Lunn's figures with confidence, it is far more difficult to follow some of his deductions, especially as they are expressed briefly and almost dogmatically: certainly without full argument on both sides. He writes: "In all the wealth of ecclesiastical records there is not one which shows that the parish priests took to shameless flight or complete abandonment of their most sacred duties." Before we accept this brief statement, let us look more closely at contemporary and sub-contemporary evidence, which is fairly voluminous. We have judgments on the parish

clergy from two monastic chroniclers, Birchington of Canterbury and Dene of Rochester.<sup>8</sup> The former writes: "In this pestilence scarce one-third of the population remained alive. Then, also, there was so great scarcity and rarity of priests that parish churches remained altogether unserved, and beneficed parsons had turned aside from the care of their benefices for fear of death, not knowing where they might dwell." Dene writes: "In this plague many chaplains and hired parish priests would not serve without excessive pay. The Bishop of Rochester, by a mandate of June 27th, 1349, to the Archdeacon of Rochester, commanded these to serve at the same salaries, under pain of suspension and interdict. Moreover, many [*plures*] beneficed clergy, seeing that the number of their parishioners had been so diminished by the plague that they could not live upon such oblations as were left, deserted their benefices." Against these deserters the bishop decreed measures which were not likely to be very effectual. Other bishops, at the same time, were struggling with the same difficulty. We read in the *Victoria County History* for Hampshire: "In April, 1350, when the scourge had abated, the Bishop issued a general admonition to his clergy as to residence in their parishes. Reports, he says, had reached him of some priests shamefully absenting themselves from their cures to the danger of many souls, so that even the Holy Sacrifice for which the church had been built and adorned had not been celebrated. He complained further that in some cases the churches had been left to birds and beasts and were becoming ruinous, and ordered all absentees to return within a month." Therefore, the Archbishop of Canterbury issued a decree for all the dioceses of his province; a decree which, as usual, is named after its first word, *Effrentata*. "The unbridled cupidity of the human race", he declares, has, since the coming of this plague, perverted the hearts of the clergy, who "neglect to bear the cure of souls and to support the mutual burdens of parish priests; nay, they even abandon these altogether [for chantry-Masses and similar jobs]; so that, under a simple title and with

little labour, they claim greater profits than the parish priests". In *Piers Plowman* we get similar evidence. The author, describing the evils of his time, writes:

Parsons and parish priests pleyned them to the bishop,  
That their parishes were poor sith the pestilence-time,  
To have a licence and a leave at London for to dwell,  
And singen there for simony; for silver is sweet."

Dr Lunn does indeed deal in a brief footnote with Birchington's evidence; yet he ignores not only the fact that it is borne out by almost every Continental chronicler who touches upon the subject, but by even the side-lights from our own English records. To begin with the very earliest document of the kind in our registers, the Bath and Wells proclamation of January 1349 quoted above in this chapter. Here the bishop takes his stand on the fact, which must have been patent to all his hearers, that the sick are dying wholesale without ecclesiastical ministrations. Secondly, he asserts (and this again is a matter in which both he and his hearers must have had the most definite and direct experience) that this default is due, in part at least, to the unwillingness of priests to face the plague. There is, moreover, further documentary evidence which Dr Lunn's statistics themselves have brought out for the first time. The figures for Lichfield diocese (where, with unusual care, the *cause* of each vacancy is registered) in the whole twelve months before the plague give only four priests who resigned their cures. But in the six plague months (April to October 1349) there were 35 resignations. In the following year there were 42, i.e. 21 per six months. Upon this he comments: "But the motives actuating in the 42 cases were most certainly not cowardice, but rather that impoverishment of living which was one result of the plague." It is very difficult to accept this confident assertion. No doubt impoverishment was an extremely important factor; *Piers Plowman* and other documents show this plainly enough. But if it was most important of all—or indeed, as these words would persuade us, the only one worth

considering—how can we possibly account for the fact that the post-plague year, for which we have most definite evidence of impoverishment, produced a markedly lower proportion of resignations than the actual plague months, during which cowardice would be the most probable motive? During that half-year of actual plague, while the bishops were publishing frantic appeals for clerical help, out of the 99 Derbyshire vacancies only 77 were caused by death and 22 by resignation. In Lincoln diocese, during the six worst plague months (May-October) there were 97 resignations as against 76 in the six pre-plague months. The disproportion is even greater if we choose six other plague months (July-December), where we have 136 resignations, or nearly double the pre-plague rate. In York diocese the two pre-plague months record an average of only two resignations, while the two worst plague months have an average of  $13\frac{1}{2}$ . On the other hand, when we look narrowly into the registers, we find another very remarkable change during the plague: the number of vicarages that change hands increases enormously in proportion to the rectories; and this goes definitely to bear out the general complaint that, naturally enough, it was much harder to fill up the poorer livings than the richer. Thus we must always bear in mind the economic nexus; yet to rule out the element of fear seems not only psychologically paradoxical, but false to the plainest documentary evidence. When Dr Lunn goes on to reject Birchington's categorical statement, on the ground that "there was no real scarcity of priests at all", his words cannot be accepted in the sense which his argument requires. Desperate demand produced numerical supply: the registers show that the vacant rectories and vicarages were in fact filled, though we have no evidence that the "chaplaincies" (in modern English, curacies) were. There were enough applicants for the loaves and fishes; but that is all that the documents can tell us. However ready we ourselves may be to confess that we should probably have played an unheroic part in this tragedy, that does not justify our ignoring the circumstances which made against heroism in those days which we are actually studying.

These English considerations are much strengthened by Continental analogies. The plague-ravages, as described by chroniclers abroad, are so exactly parallel to those in England, that we may argue strongly—though not, of course, conclusively—from one to the other. The testimony of those chroniclers is overwhelming against any distinctive clerical self-sacrifice: a unanimity all the more remarkable because they themselves were nearly all clerics, often monks or friars, and sometimes their criticism touches not a rival order, but their own. I have printed the evidence far more fully in my monograph than space will here permit. Briefly, we have the judgment of 22 chroniclers, English and foreign, upon the behaviour of the clergy during the pestilence. Of the eight least unfavourable, one only is entirely favourable; but he speaks only for his own neighbourhood (Catania). The two next best, while praising the friars or the nurses, contrast these with the negligent behaviour of the parish priests. The remainder are frankly, and sometimes violently, unfavourable. It would be difficult to find any historical question, involving so directly and so deeply the reputation of an enormously numerous and influential body, with exceptional facilities for self-defence and self-advertisement, in which the evidence is so overwhelming against them. Even though all these chroniclers had been mistaken as to the facts (though, as we have seen, the official documents go far to support them), there would still remain the plain consideration that, whatever the priests had actually done, public opinion did judge them to have fallen, as a body, far below the height of their sacred office. That belief, in itself, would go far to explain Lollardy and the Reformation. The monastic chronicler Knighton, who lays such stress upon the ravages of the pestilence and the difficulty of getting suitable priests, is equally emphatic as to the sudden rise of the Lollards. Under the year 1382 he tells us how "they multiplied exceedingly like budding plants, and filled the whole realm everywhere, and became as familiar as though all had come forth upon the same day. For this sect was held in the greatest honour at that time; and it multiplied so greatly that you could scarce meet two men on the road

but that one of them was a disciple of Wyclif." And, among their heretical doctrines, he specifies: "*Item*, [they hold] that no rector or vicar or prelate of any kind is excused from residing personally in his own parish by the fact that he is in the service of a bishop or archbishop or pope. *Item*, that rectors and vicars who do not celebrate Mass, nor administer the Church sacraments, should even be removed in favour of others; for they are unworthy, and wasters of the Church's goods." Here is an unmistakable echo of what Dene and Birchington and the bishops' registers have told us concerning men's doings and thoughts during the Great Pestilence. This England in which men met so many Lollards by the way was an England in which every man over fifty had seen with his own eyes how Christ's folk had often died like beasts in holes and in the streets without benefit of clergy; he had heard with his own ears how the priest, like the day-labourer, was refusing the old work except at double pay, and was ready to "down tools" in this very natural economic struggle.

Indeed, the effect of this pestilence upon the Reformation is insisted upon with strongest emphasis by those who most regret that revolution; though they naturally plead a very different causation. Cardinal Gasquet wrote: "It is a well-ascertained fact, strange as it may seem, that men are not, as a rule, made better by great and universal visitations of Divine Providence." Another writes: "The Middle Ages would have declined in any case: they were fatigued and were growing old; but the process was at once accelerated and warped by the Black Death. Change would have come; but that it came so rapidly and with such force, and—if I may use the phrase—with such a 'twist', we must set down to that exceeding plague." But can we really accept any conception of Providence which rests upon the assumption of Divine Miscalculation, and which argues that a blow intended to awaken men to their sins—for this is the universal explanation given by orthodox contemporary chroniclers in face of the plague—did actually result in religious ruin for the world? Again, does not the second plea, under cover of a misleading metaphor, beg the question no less definitely? If we would



content ourselves with speaking of a "change of direction", which conveys neither good nor evil implication, we are on safe and agreed lines. After the Black Death, as after the Great War of 1914, scarcely anything went on exactly as before. But the words "warped" and "twist" distinctly assume some falsity of direction; they even imply some direction flatly contrary to the previous course of civilization. Yet, if we take the plain evidence as it stands, and conclude that the Black Death opened the eyes of the average man to that truth which St Bernard and successive saints had proclaimed long since in exaggerated language, "the priests are worse than the people", then its effect upon the Reformation would seem plain enough, and its influence, on the whole, not reactionary but progressive and civilizing.

But let us again remind ourselves of those words, "exaggerated language". It was only that the priesthood were becoming, more and more plainly, unequal to their superhuman pretensions and therefore unworthy of their enormous corporate and personal privileges. Otherwise, man for man, they were, as they always have been in all Christian denominations, better than the laity. Yet, as saints had insisted for centuries past, and as men saw now by plain every-day experience, the priests were not sufficiently superior. This foul disease, as we have seen in a previous chapter, accomplished what popes and councils had vainly attempted; it broke down the bad old system of putting ignorant boys into the best livings, while curates at starvation wages did the actual work. Although, on the eve of the Reformation, men still complained that very many parishes were served by incompetent hirelings in the absence of the rector, yet no later list of institutions shows anything approaching to the scandalous proportion of boy-incumbents which stares us in the face from the pre-plague episcopal registers. To emphasize these facts is the historian's plain duty; and it can be done without self-righteousness.

After all, priests and monks and nuns were men and women, and they fled no more than the doctors and notaries;

sometimes even less. Yet the horrible trial did show them as men and women; and the rest of medieval history is deeply coloured by the revelation, so convincing in its completeness and universality, that the priests, the class who had sometimes been quasi-deified—those who could be said in loose language to "make the Body of Christ"—were almost as panic-stricken as the rest of mankind.<sup>10</sup> Here, again, we must emphasize that moderating adverb *almost*; for it is evident that, whatever stress we may lay upon the contemporary complaints which I have quoted, the mortality among resident parish priests must have been above the average. The non-resident cleric was, roughly speaking, as favourably placed as any pope or bishop; it depended only upon his conscience to mingle freely with his fellows or to avoid every risk of contagion by retiring to the safest spot he could find; and the evidence shows that there were areas of comparative safety, though it was doubtless often difficult to distinguish these at the actual crisis. But the resident parson, even the least courageous, must have run far greater risks. At the beginning, if only in routine, he would sing his daily Mass, and come in to shrive the sick. Even, when the risk of infection became obvious, few would be so pusillanimous as to abandon at once the most sacred and important of their professional duties. When war has broken out, even the least enterprising soldier has at once a lower chance of survival than the civilian; and when this plague broke out, the least courageous parish priest ran a similar risk. He lived, it is true, under less insanitary domestic conditions than the average artisan or peasant. There was no overcrowding in his house; normally there could only be a single servant, and even when, as was too frequently the case, the parson had sons and daughters, these seldom lived in the house with him; such cohabitation is always mentioned by ecclesiastical disciplinarians as a special aggravation. To this extent, therefore, his chances of survival were above the average; but they must have been more than counterbalanced by his contact with sick folk; and this may to some extent explain the

remarkable frequency of change in the poorer livings as compared with the rich rectories. A vicar could not often pay a substitute; he must do the work and take the risk himself; he could not afford to wander in search of some more secluded and healthier spot; he must either cynically repudiate every responsibility of his sacred profession or face considerable extra chances of infection. We may take it as probable, therefore, that the average lay mortality was rather lower, and perhaps a good deal lower, than that among the incumbents. Though some manor rolls show a far higher death-rate, others show surprisingly little, and it is evident that the incidence of the plague was extremely irregular. Therefore I cannot help feeling that the ordinary computation for the laity is too high, and that we must not assume a higher death-rate than one-third for the population of England, or of Europe in general. It will be noted that Birchington suggests two-thirds; but we must always discount the figures of a chronicler.

So much for the layman's body; and now for his soul. The above-quoted episcopal decree of Bath and Wells, with similar measures by which the authorities attempted to guarantee, in the priest's absence, some sort of emergency sacramental guidance for the laity, must have gone far towards spiritual emancipation. The people began to learn independence of their Professional Mediator; and that lesson, once learned, was never completely forgotten. We shall see something of the same results from that wave of mysticism which marks the fourteenth century: we may see it also in those wild excesses of the Flagellants, and that Dancing Mania which followed upon the plague years. The Church was affected here, to an even stronger degree, than the manor was.

For the landlord (though, here again, modern research warns us increasingly against exaggeration) was met by a sudden shortage of labour, and compelled in the long run to make terms with it. But this was not without a fierce struggle. Parliament, which of course represented the upper-class interests almost exclusively, passed successive acts after the plague,

forbidding rise of wages or of prices, or the migration of labourers in search of better employment. But prices were not thus stabilized: nor could the labourer accept the old wage on such terms. Langland, writing little more than twenty years after the first of these acts, describes the effect of this upon the less settled wage-earner:

And then would Wastour not work, but wandren about . . .  
Labourers, that have no land to live on but their hands,  
Deigned not to dine to-day on yesterday's cabbage,  
May no penny-ale please them, nor no piece of bacon,  
But if it be fresh flesh or fish, fried or baked,  
And that hot and hotter still, to keep the chill from their maw  
And, but if he be highly hired, else will he chide  
And wail the time that ever he was workman born.  
And then curseth he the King, and all his Council with him,  
That lay down such laws, the labourers to grieve.<sup>11</sup>

Here the satirist is amply corroborated by an entry in the Lincolnshire Assize Roll of 1353. "The jury present that William de Caburn, of Lymbergh, ploughman, will not work except as a day-labourer or a monthly labourer. And he will not eat salt meat, but only fresh meat; and for this cause he hath departed from the township; for no man dared to hire him in this fashion contrary to the statute of our lord the King."<sup>12</sup> Thus the friction increased from year to year: for this is but one specimen from many. In 1377, Churchmen and others complained to the King in Parliament that villeins will no longer perform servile duties, but band together and riot, so that, "if due remedy be not provided by Parliament, greater mischief (which may God prohibit!) will ensue". As we all know, remedy was not provided, and God did not prohibit, and in 1381 came the great Peasants' Revolt. Professor Levett, whose researches in this field are among the latest and soundest, writes: "The Black Death did not in any strictly economic sense cause the Peasants' Revolt or the breakdown of villeinage; but it gave birth, in many cases, to

a smouldering feeling of discontent, an inarticulate desire for change, which found its outlet in the rising of 1381." Thus two of the most characteristic medieval institutions were shaken in a few months: the Church and the Manor. It was far easier henceforth to question the divine right of the priest and the divine right of the landlord.

To sum up: the Black Death, like the Great War of 1914, shook many things to the very base, and overthrew those whose foundations were faulty, while the sounder survived. Each of these catastrophes has shown the astonishing elasticity of human nature. Institutions founded solidly on deep human needs, and movements inspired by elementary natural impulses, after the first shock, were modified, but not broken. Municipal growth, for instance, was not permanently checked. Norwich appears to have been one of the cities which suffered most heavily; yet we find the citizens, very shortly afterwards, paying contributions at the pre-plague valuation without a murmur. Again, the Black Death seems to have had very little effect on the Hundred Years' War; apparently it was always possible to get soldiers. Indeed, the contemporary Paduan chronicler, Guglielmo Cortusio, a learned judge, and evidently something of a philosopher, notes expressly that "at this time [of plague] Christendom was fighting furiously in five places"—England against France, the King of Hungary against Apulia, the King of Bohemia against Bavaria, the Romans against their own Government, and the Eastern Empire against the Turks. This absence of paralysis even through the plague months, this "business as usual", is emphasized also by Dr Lunn in his thesis.

The plague returned in later years at fairly frequent intervals; in 1361, 1368, 1375, 1382, 1390, [1406], 1438-9, 1464-5, and possibly 1471.<sup>18</sup> Some of these may not have been the true bubonic plague. In 1485 came the terrible "sweating sickness", which recurred in 1487, 1499, and 1504. It is sometimes asserted that these visitations were comparable to the Black Death; but that is not borne out by any documentary evidence that has yet been produced. The plague of 1361, which was probably the worst, carried off scarcely

more than half the Black Death proportion of clergy, so far as the registers are available. As Dr Creighton points out, nearly all our evidence for these later visitations comes from the towns: "there is not a word in them about the rural districts", and none has been produced from the manor rolls.

### 39. THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR<sup>1</sup>

No war is inevitable, yet this may be said to have been as nearly so as any. The reign of Henry II had created an impossible situation. He held large portions of France as a feudal vassal, and vague definitions of feudalism constantly led to wars between great vassals and their over-lords. Any such war in France was in fact civil war, and in this particular case civil war was complicated by foreign invasion from England.

No quarrels in history are more fatal than civil wars with aided invasions. It may almost be said that only one thing could have avoided war in those circumstances. If there had been two men like St Louis reigning at the same moment, then reason and justice might now have prevailed, and the English might have been bought out of France or have retired. Again, one thing alone could have shortened the struggle; namely, if the rapid advance in military power at that time could have been made by France, the country which had the greater population and was the stronger in strategical position. What actually happened was exactly the opposite; and the deceptive English successes greatly encouraged the whole national interest in these wars. On the one side was our national covetousness and ambition, with a sense of ancient wrong; for St Louis had definite qualms as to the justice of his grandfather's conquest of Normandy, and Philip the Fair's conquests had been of far more doubtful justice. On the other side was a France no less covetous than we, if only the occasion had offered, and now fighting for her very existence. We may call this the first great national war in English history, in the modified sense in which the word "national" could be used of that time. The nearest approach to it, perhaps, in medieval history was in the wars of Germany against her eastern neighbours, Saxony, the Slavs, Hungary and Bohemia.

Let us first regard it from the purely military standpoint. Here it is difficult to exaggerate its importance. Guibert de Nogent, one of the greatest chroniclers of the Crusades, called his history "*Gesta Dei per Francos*"—God's Dealings through the French. The greatest majority of successes in those Crusades had been won by natives of what we now call France. France, again, had won a splendid national victory at Bouvines against a strong European coalition; and her defeat by the Flemings at Courtrai had been avenged at Mons-en-Pévèle and Roosebeke. When, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, Pierre Dubois suggested as a policy for European peace that the King of France should make a tame cat of the Pope and then rule righteously over the whole of Europe, we may say that this proposal was quite natural, since it voiced not merely French vanity but also to some extent full European belief. Petrarch, in one of his letters, describes the stupor of the Western World when John's defeat and captivity at Poitiers was noised abroad. As the French historian Luce puts it: "Crécy had been a grievous defeat: Poitiers was a catastrophe comparable to Waterloo, Jena and Sedan." True, the French king had failed to relieve Calais after Crécy, and the English nearly always got the best of the minor encounters for the next ten years. But these victories were small in themselves; very few of them separately were important; and, in those days of difficult communication, few people outside the invaded areas knew how the canker of war was eating into France, or how far it was directly responsible for the disorganization of government and the over-taxation of the people. Then, at last, John raised a vast host to crush these wasps once for all. The result was that he found himself a prisoner; that his people were further taxed with the greatest ransom, perhaps, of the whole Middle Ages; and that the government of France was reduced to more hopeless anarchy than before. We must not, of course, forget the gross tactical blunders committed by John in the actual battle. In addition to all these, he had ordered the Dauphin and his brother, after they had been beaten in a preliminary skirmish, to retire with their men from the field.



Yet, even after all this, the French who stood firm still outnumbered the English: but they were hopelessly defeated.

How was this? The root cause was first pointed out by the greatest of authorities on this period, Siméon Luce. He wrote: "The defeat of the French depended upon a deep-seated and irresistible cause, independent not only of the personal bravery of our soldiers, but of the heroism of a leader [like Du Guesclin], and even to a certain point independent of his generalship."<sup>2</sup> That cause was the English military organization, which was then both national and absolutely businesslike. True, manhood service was the theory everywhere in the Middle Ages; but in no great State was it practised as in England. As Luce puts it, "the phrase 'compulsory military service' is modern, is even up-to-date in contemporary politics. But the thing itself is old, and it is oldest among the very people who know least of it nowadays; and Edward III, especially, practised it on a large scale." For, on the English side, there was compulsory manhood service with constant views of arms; muster-rolls of that period still survive in some of our municipal records. In France, on the other hand, this theoretical principle had been allowed to die out in practice, and the so-called "levies" of men were ordered only in order that they might buy themselves off and thus provide money for the old-fashioned feudal host. Even the civic militias were badly organized. We have already seen how, when the inhabitants of three villages in the South maintained, quite justly, that they would no longer pay for substitutes but come in person, the viguier of Béziers settled the dispute with that one level volley: "You bloody peasants! whether you will or whether you won't, you shall pay all the same!"<sup>3</sup> Even in the later stages of the war, the French nation had never really learned that lesson. True, the Grande Ordonnance of 1357—those 67 articles forced upon the Dauphin, the future Charles V, by Étienne Marcel and the democracy of Paris—did indeed insist that the Government should arm not only the townsfolk, but the far more numerous and hardier class of peasantry also. But the Dauphin hated all these articles thus thrust upon him; the

country in general was far less politically advanced than those democrats of the capital; and the whole ordinance remained a dead letter.

Therefore France, throughout the later Middle Ages, never had such a national army as we brought to Neville's Cross, nor even in the sense in which our armies of Crécy, Poitiers and Azincourt were national. The first of those, at least, was in large part won by conscripts; and, where an army is national, it is also businesslike. Edward I had been a really national king, so far as any medieval sovereign can so be called; and he was also the creator of the national medieval military tactics. He had learned in his Welsh and Scottish wars one lesson of capital importance; the superiority of the longbow to the crossbow. Therefore he, and Edward III after him, encouraged archery, and behind his bowmen were "knife-men" with long daggers; the whole were supported by divisions of the feudal heavy cavalry which protected the bowmen at their work. Thus, when the arrows had thrown the hostile knights and men-at-arms into confusion, the knights charged into the struggling mass and completed the rout. Falkirk was the first great battle in which Edward I developed these tactics; at Bannockburn we fell back into the old feudal blunders for the first and last time; thenceforward this irresistible combination invented by Edward I was the regular routine of English armies. The French might have learned something of this from their defeat by the Flemings at Courtrai. Certainly Crécy and Poitiers were very plain lessons; but they never learned the true secret of national defence during that whole century and more. As Langlois puts it in Lavissee's great co-operative *History of France*: "Falkirk and Courtrai foretell the great disasters of the Hundred Years' War; fifty years afterwards, the English had forgotten nothing of their lesson, and the French had learned nothing." This is why England developed a superiority which, on its smaller scale, throws even the Napoleonic superiority into the shade. For it, the causes lay in the whole system. England did not always produce the greatest generals; the greatest in the whole war, in most men's opinion, was Du Guesclin. Yet Crécy, Poitiers

and Azincourt, coming close enough together to fall within the memory of a single man, were perhaps more startling victories, against greater odds, than any similar group in the history of the world. Again, we may contrast our own marches across France, not once or twice only during this long war, with the fact that the French never did more than burn a few of our ports and occupy the Isle of Wight for a few months, even when she and Spain had destroyed our fleet off La Rochelle in 1372, and thus commanded the seas for eight years. If we thus compare English power on land with French impotence all this time, and remember how far France outnumbered us in population, and how fine are the fighting qualities of the French people in themselves, it is difficult to find another parallel to this in military history.

No doubt military history is in itself a small thing; we have, as a rule, too much of it in historical books. But the effect of wars upon social history is a subject of capital importance; and that is why the ablest socialists in modern France and Germany, long before 1914, were paying such close attention to a subject which as citizens they hated, but which, as scientific students of history or politics, they felt it suicidal to neglect. Britain and America are the only two countries in which socialists not only ignore this truth, but seem to boast their ignorance as a virtue.

If we read any French history of political institutions, or of religious and moral life, from 1350 to 1450, then we find the same cry repeated over and over again: "it was miserable; things went from bad to worse; but the root cause was in those disastrous invasions!" We may perhaps feel that they overdo it a little: the English Invader is as convenient to suggest in solution of any historical problem as the Black Death is; and doubtless both are often over-emphasized. But the thing in the main seems undeniable. Although the wars unquestionably caused great suffering in England, and were partly responsible for two great revolts and other smaller risings, and although most of us would willingly wipe the whole page out of the world's history, so long as no more sordid page were substituted for it, yet it seems as though

English trade and commerce did, on the whole, increase or hold its own during most of those years. Town life flourished fairly, at least, though there seems to have been a good deal of stagnation and decay in the first three-quarters of the fifteenth century; and this was one of our greatest centuries for parliamentary liberties. Yet, a few miles away, just over the Channel, the growth of towns was completely arrested, and dozens of them, during this century, actually surrendered their liberties because they were no longer able to accept the responsibilities implied in their charters. Meanwhile their parliamentary liberties, after one hopeless and bloody revolt, steadily decreased. In commerce and industry France had never rivalled Lombardy or the Low Countries. Yet, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the great fairs of Champagne (especially that of Troyes) were among the most important in Europe. These were the meeting-point of the overland trade from the East with merchants from England, the Low Countries, and the great and populous kingdom of France. Already before the Hundred Years' War the merchants had invented a clearing-house system; they paid all their purchases on the last day of the fair, mainly with bills: moreover, there was elaborate and powerful legislation to ensure probity, and credit was so good that loans were made at lower interest than anywhere else. The Hundred Years' War destroyed all this. The roads became infested with brigands, or sunk in morasses. Sometimes they even disappeared altogether, overgrown with shrubs and trees. Rivers silted up: lords, and even royal officers, multiplied illegal tolls. Market-halls fell into ruins. The great fair of Paris was first abolished; then even those of Champagne, which "in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries attracted merchants from the whole of Europe".<sup>4</sup> Now, therefore, the trade of Northern France went by the Rhine to the Low Countries: that of Southern France to the fair of Geneva. In a single town, Alais, we happen to have exact statistics of depopulation. The taxable property was £40,000 in 1338, £26,000 in 1405, £19,000 in about 1440. In Paris, there are said to have been 24,000 houses in ruins or deserted: this is probably exag-

gerated; but certainly the authorities were more than once compelled to sell wholesale these empty houses, which no longer paid rates and were a nuisance to the neighbourhood. The French chronicler Thomas Basin relates the miserable devastation of some of the richest parts of Normandy, over which the ebb and flow of war passed again and again. In some of those districts, nothing could be cultivated that lay beyond easy reach of the nearest fortified town or castle. Even there, the peasant was ready to cut his traces and leave his plough the moment the alarm bell rang from the nearest tower; and (says Basin) the very swine grew so accustomed to this stampede that they would run of their own accord when the bell rang out. It has been calculated that the Hundred Years' War diminished the French population by at least one-third, while it kept that of England stationary. In both cases, of course, we must also count the Black Death and other plagues. All this desolation had a disastrous effect upon the Church also. The bishops were no longer able to visit dioceses. The monks ceased to hold their General Chapters. Of the country parishes, many had now no clergy at all; and the old disorders of non-residence and neglect were far worse than ever before. French society, in the latter half of the fifteenth century, was certainly extremely corrupt. The University of Paris was in full decadence; and by far the most remarkable man of letters is that François Villon, "house-breaker and poet", to whom R. L. Stevenson consecrated one of his most interesting essays. And, at last, when the country found comparative rest, this was under the rule of the despot and the mercenary, as in Italy.

It came about thus. The Estates in 1439 granted to Charles VII, for the sake of military security, enormous freedom of taxation. He was permitted to take the whole *taille* of France, i.e. all the taxes which hitherto the feudal lords had raised from their tenants. This at once brought him in 1,800,000 *livres* a year; and with that sum he hired and organized a regular army. But the Estates had made no definite bargain as to the limitations of this system, either in time or in money. Therefore Charles and his successors not only continued it to

perpetuity, but raised at their own will the rate of assessment. Hence a fundamental difference between Britain and France until the Revolution of 1789. The French kings were absolute masters both of the national purse and of the national army: they ruled what was, apart from the totalitarian Papacy, the most totalitarian state in Europe: the price of our expulsion from French soil was the riveting of these chains upon the French people. Upon this transaction of 1439 Professor Lodge comments: "Englishmen may hold that orderly government and national independence were dearly purchased by the sacrifice of all securities for constitutional liberty; but it is at least probable that if they had ever found themselves in such an evil plight they would have concluded the same bargain on the same terms." True; yet, without being pharisaical, we have a right to look farther than this, and to follow the French historian Luce in his attempt to trace the fundamental causes why France found herself in such a miserable state that even despotism and the rule of a hireling soldiery came as a relief. Partly, no doubt, we must remember our fortunate insular position, which, without guaranteeing us altogether, certainly made invasion more difficult. Again, we must not forget the madness of Charles VI at a critical moment: but it is difficult to imagine the English Government so completely paralysed by a king's madness. Even before the war, England was already in advance of France in parliamentary government. For we were a smaller nation, with more coherence; and the great feudal lords, even in the thirteenth century, had much less power among us. Thus far we had always the advantage: but greatest of all was our secure insularity. The social contrast between England, secure from invasion, and France, with one eye always necessarily fixed upon the actual or possible invader, was clearly noted by the penetrating eye of Commynes. After marking the comparative decency of civil wars in England, even while they last, he points out their brevity. "In England, if any discord arises, in ten days or less one party or the other has gained the upper hand. But it is not thus with our affairs on this side [of the Channel]; for our king had to wage warfare extended over several portions

of his kingdom, and to look out for his neighbours; and specially did he need, among all his other business, to content the King of England . . . that he should not meddle in our affairs", as he is always on the watch to do.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, when all allowances have been made, it is impossible to deny that French historians are right in the main, and that the Hundred Years' War influenced internal politics in France even more disastrously than the foreign invader influenced French politics during the Revolutionary Wars. Then, it was those Austrian and Prussian and English invaders who made the French glad to accept one military tyranny after another: first that of the Committee of Public Safety, and next that of Napoleon: just as, in 1871, it was the foreign invasion which was mainly responsible for the horrors of the Paris Commune and its repression.

Prudent French statesmen saw this new ordinance of 1439 in its full significance. Presently, we find Bishop Jean-Jouvenel des Ursins pleading, in a memorial to Charles VII: Now that the English are at last driven out of France, need this host of mercenaries be maintained? Is there no danger of the soldiers oppressing the people?—he dares not add, "and of the king ruling tyrannically by their means". But upon the irresponsible taxation he does venture to speak plainly: "Your kingdom is called France, because your subjects ought to be free [*francs*] indeed. Yet, at present, they are more subject to arbitrary taxation than the very serfs are."

We may trace the English citizen-soldier, bearing the burden of arms and therefore the more conscious of his responsibility for war and peace, in Bishop Latimer's fond recollections of his father the yeoman farmer, whose armour he buckled on for Blackheath Field, and in his praise for the robust sport of archery. The contrast between this and France, again, may be read in the story of their fifteenth-century revolts. In both cases, we have great nobles as revolutionaries; but the rest is far different. In France, these were nearly always jealous princes of royal blood, mustering their retainers and hiring mercenaries against the Crown's comparatively orderly government, backed up by its standing army. Both parties fought

thus over the bodies of the helpless peasantry; and Sir John Fortescue described the result in words not too overcharged with patriotic exaggeration.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, just as the war had been made at the peasant's expense, so also was the peace; king compromised with nobles on terms which allowed both to domineer still more over the common man. Our English rebellions were very different: men rose and fought not against good but against bad or weak government. Thus, in the Wars of the Roses, when great nobles led the movement, they had, on the whole, the support of the towns. Therefore, while ambitious lords and their retainers were slaying each other, the commoners partly stood aside, allowing these their social enemies to commit political suicide; or, in so far as they interfered, they consulted their own best interests, and those of the realm, by throwing their sword into the scale of order. Everywhere our central authority, when strong, was able to call upon the local levies, which sometimes (at Towton, for instance) made serious contributions to the victory. The law-courts sat all through: there was no serious interruption to trade and industry. Here again we turn to Commynes, an historian of wide political experience and unprecedented philosophic insight. He noted that in England, despite all the brutalities of civil strife, "there are no buildings destroyed or demolished by war, and there the mischief of it falls on those who make the war". "This England is", he says, "among all the world's lordships of which I have knowledge, that where public weal is best ordered, and where least violence reigns over the people. . . . The king can undertake no enterprise of account without assembling his parliament; which is a thing most wise and holy; and therefore are these kings stronger and better served" than the despotic sovereigns of the Continent.<sup>7</sup> There is some real reason for regarding the fifteenth century as the golden age of the English agricultural labourer, who in 1381 had shown so much more political sense, discipline and self-restraint than his French brother.

Nor may we look upon the French purely as innocent victims throughout all these quarrels and wars. The effect of the



English invasions upon French life, in every department, is nowhere set out so fully, and with such impartiality (since these are documents written with a single business aim, without the remotest afterthought of appeal to posterity), as in the text and the introduction of Father Denifle's *Désolation des Églises*. In that book we have a collection, not of political documents, but of supplications to the different Popes during those hundred years, setting forth the exact reasons which made it impossible for such and such a bishop to visit his own diocese, for such and such a monastery to keep the rule of St Benedict any longer, and so on. These supplications entirely dispel the notion that the horrible ravages of the Hundred Years' War were due to the greater barbarity of the victors—a cheap conclusion to which people sometimes jump, arguing confusedly that, since war is a relic of barbarism, therefore the victory is likely to go to the more barbarous side. After all, war is at least so far a Judgment of God, that, on the whole, men's finest qualities do tell there as elsewhere: St Thomas More brought that out plainly in his *Utopia*. Denifle shows clearly how the worst barbarities were often inflicted on the French by their own fellow-countrymen; by the mercenaries who were hired to fight for them, and who, no longer receiving their pay, or sometimes striking for higher pay, pillaged their own country. Petit-Dutaillis quotes the case of "letters of remission granted by Charles VII to a mercenary who, from his youth upwards, had served the king without ever receiving 'any pay, wages, or recompense', and who 'had as it were been compelled to pillage' ". This, he points out, "justifies the exclamation of [Charles's minister,] Jouvénel des Ursins: 'For God's sake, Sire, pardon me; for in truth I may well say that herein you have committed a great fault' ". Again, Father Denifle shows the English discipline as enormously superior to the French; we find the Frenchmen themselves complaining that, whereas a safe-conduct from an English captain would be respected by English soldiers, formal French safe-conducts were broken whenever French soldiers thought they could gain by the treachery. Moreover, the one supreme French glory in the whole war—the heroism

of Joan of Arc—the one thing in those hundred years which really redeems human nature—was miserably neglected by many of her own compatriots at the time. Denifle points out how, after the English had succeeded in burning her, the French seemed to have grown really ashamed of the victim, and practically to have forgotten her heroism within twenty years of her death.

Therefore, looking closely into the social life of both countries, whatever faults we may find in the England of those years, we may find worse in France. True, the trial wrought her into a single country and roused a real feeling of nationality, real patriotism. But even in England we may trace much of this; and the suffering and discontent among us; the lowering of political morality which is often traced as one of the causes of the Wars of the Roses; all these were distinctly less noticeable than in France.

One very serious politico-social effect of the Hundred Years' War upon France must here be added. A glance at any historical atlas will show how, twice over, half of France was in possession of the King of England. That in itself was a great evil; but, far worse than this, those two halves at different periods were almost entirely different. They had scarcely anything in common but Guienne in the narrower sense, Ponthieu and Calais. The English obtained by the Treaty of Troyes precisely what they had not been able to get by the Treaty of Brétigny, and *vice versa*. To realize the significance of this, let us think of the Irish question of modern times as impartially as we can, and consider the moral effect of those French changes backwards and forwards, without any pretence of consulting the provinces concerned. Imagine the Ulster question decided by force of arms one year, and a few years afterwards by equal violence on exactly opposite lines—Ulster fighting to keep out of the British Empire, and the South fighting to come in. From that point of view we may gauge the impossibility of settled civilization in such conditions, and the readiness to support any single tyranny in exchange for this double tyranny or this treble tyranny, for in France there was the Burgundian alien also. We may under-

stand the undying hatred of the invader that was left by the war, and the tenfold sense of patriotism, but a patriotism mainly centred in one office—in one man—the king. Here we find much that explains the later dictum of French royalty: "l'État, c'est moi." Even that was better than no state at all; better than a conglomerate of provinces in which a man might say: "to-day I am French, to-morrow I may be English."

These last eighteen years of world-history have exposed the fatal error—however generous, in most minds—of building upon the assumption that physical force is rapidly losing its influence on human affairs. Is it not, to begin with, a gross psychological error to treat physical force as a thing so clearly separable from intellectual and moral that we may pigeon-hole them separately without further thought? Air-bombs and poison-gas (to take force at its most deadly) are highly intellectual products, while dynamite in the mine and arsenic in medicine can serve moral ends in a fashion unknown to our ancestors. War has never been a mere matter of brute force, else why has the mammoth perished, and man come to a world-mastery which is disputable (so some scientists tell us) only by the insects? Physical courage is doubtless inferior to moral courage, but would any moralist venture to deny its superiority, *caeteris paribus*, over physical cowardice? Or, again, will any observer of his fellow-men venture to maintain that, in proportion as a man is physically brave, in that same proportion he is likely to lack moral courage? War is the enemy: but the first step towards conquest of any enemy is to understand him; to measure him not on his weak side alone, but also in his strength. Here, therefore, I see no reason for disguising my settled conviction that true pacifism—instructed and cool-headed pacifism, as apart from those negative books which rely mainly on hysterical denunciations of war and descriptions of the soldier as a hired murderer—has nothing to lose, but very much to gain, from a penetrating study of war in its social effects; and especially, perhaps, in England.

## 40. THE MYSTICS

How are we to define this word *Mystic*?

Dr Inge, in his *Christian Mysticism*, devotes an appendix of fourteen pages to quotations and discussions of definitions. The two briefest are by the two greatest, perhaps, of his authors. St Bonaventura writes (in a sentence later adopted by Jean Gerson): "It is the reaching out of the soul to God through the yearning of love." Goethe wrote: "It is the scholastic of the heart, the dialectic of the feelings"; i.e. the attempt to solve the Riddle of the Universe, not by logic, but by sympathetic intuition. Hence it has always a tendency to symbolism: its language is necessarily symbolical. The mystic mind, intent upon God, seeks to find Him everywhere; that is, it seeks to penetrate to Him through the visible objects of this universe. Therefore, in the simplest, most familiar sights and sounds, it finds bodings and shadowings-forth of things unseen, unheard. But, even with the aid of the boldest symbolism of language, the mystic feels himself still more helpless and inarticulate than we all feel when we try to express our exact and inmost meaning. In the ordinary process of thinking, we start from a comparatively simple foundation, upon which we build higher and higher, refinement upon refinement, until we reach the furthest limits of coherent thought. The mystic, on the other hand, starts where coherent thought ends—or at least consciously coherent thought—and tries to face the Riddle of the Universe not by systematic observation and measurement of each detail, but by focusing the entire mental horizon into one single vision in which all detail is lost, and the solitary impression left upon the mental retina is a vague, but overpoweringly real and harmonious, image of the Infinite One and All. Poetry, for instance, usually begins where argument ends; and most great poetry is more or less mystical. Wordsworth was penetrated through and through

with the mystic significance of all natural things. Take his Ode on the *Intimations of Immortality*, or his *Tintern Abbey* where he says of wild nature :

I have felt  
*A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
 And the round ocean and the living air,  
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
 A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things.*

But perhaps the most magnificent manifestation of poetic mysticism is the last canto of Dante's *Paradiso*, where God Himself, and all the meaning of God's universe, are seen for one moment in one piercing point of light; and thenceforward this forms the one supreme reality in the seer's mind: so that Dante can conclude in those words of Boethius: "My will and desire were rolled, with the even motion of a wheel, by the Love that moves the sun and the rest of the stars." Thus St Augustine can define virtue as "the setting of love in order": "*brevis et vera definitio virtutis, ordo est amoris*": that is, the discovery of some Unity, whether a person or a law, in harmony with which we can regulate and guide our natural instincts. Thus there have been, and are, mystics in all creeds. Indeed, perhaps the clearest and most comprehensive definition is that of a great modern writer who called himself a philosophic atheist. Dr McTaggart wrote in *The New Quarterly* for July 1909 (p. 316): "It seems to me that the essential characteristics of mysticism are two in number. In the first place, it is essential to mysticism that it asserts a greater unity in the universe than is recognized in ordinary experience, or in science. . . . The second essential characteristic of mysticism is the affirmation that it is possible to be conscious of this unity in some manner which brings the knower into closer and more direct relation with what is known than can be done in ordinary discursive thought."

There was a great revival of mysticism, as of thought in general, during the twelfth century. First came the School of St-Victor at Paris and secondly, above all, St Bernard, in whom all the preponderatingly orthodox mystics of later times were steeped, from St Bonaventura to Thomas à Kempis. Much of the *Imitation* is a mosaic from St Bernard. Then came another great wave of mysticism with the Franciscan revival. In thinkers like St Bonaventura, it took a perfectly orthodox direction, especially in the contemplation of the life of Christ and the manipulation of the details of the Gospel story into every possible refinement of delicate symbolism. From a pupil of St Bonaventura, who wrote *The Hundred Meditations on the Life of Christ*, comes much of the art symbolism of the later Middle Ages. But there was a strain among the Franciscan mystics tending to follow the dangerous lines of Joachim of Fiore [1200]. This man had thought out a Theory of Development in the Christian Church; a coming New Age in which the Scriptures should be read with quite other eyes, and in which the Church should revert to something like the unsacerdotal conditions of early monasticism. This theory formed a great refuge for the Spiritual Franciscans; that is, the poor "fools" spoken of compassionately in *Piers Plowman*; the small minority who clung with even exaggerated loyalty to the original gospel of absolute poverty, and finally found themselves in collision not only with the more worldly elements in their own order, but with Pope John XXII himself.<sup>1</sup> To the extremists among these Spirituals, the Sacraments of the Church were mere symbols, destined presently to be superseded, in an age when Love should rule the world. Finally, in the scriptural Abomination of Desolation they saw a simoniacal pope, who towards the end of the world would come to the tiara; that is, John XXII. This last age would begin in 1260; from thenceforward the reign of the Holy Ghost will have begun; the reign of the Everlasting Gospel. The manifesto of this party ("Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel") was suppressed by a papal commission as quietly as possible, in view of the striking and scandalous interest which it aroused at the University of Paris,

and even more among the laity. But in England the Spirituals were far less numerous or influential; and that allusion in *Piers Plowman* is almost unique.

Far more important was that Dominican mysticism at the turn of the thirteenth century which has been admirably traced by the late Father Denifle.<sup>2</sup> He shows how this movement arose from an adaptation of the scholastic philosophy to unlearned folk, mostly nuns, and in the vulgar tone. Between 1228 and 1286 the policy of the Dominican order swung backwards and forwards on the question of the care of nunneries. On the one hand it was far harder for women, even consecrated women, than for men to keep their house in order in face of the unsettled society around them. Yet, on the other hand, the official care of these women threw a great deal of extra work and trouble upon the friars, and even involved some risk of scandal; a point upon which St Bonaventura laid great stress at this very time in connection with the same problem as presented to his own Franciscan order. In 1286, then, the Dominican General Chapter came to its final decision, that the men should undertake the spiritual and to a certain extent the temporal guidance of the women, but that the friars thus sent to the nunneries should be exclusively *docti fratres*, that is, men of mature age who had done their full university course, not only in the arts but also in theology. This had an epoch-making influence on the Upper Rhine, one of the most thickly populated and cultured districts of Europe. At the end of this century the Teutonic province of Dominicans had seventy nunneries, while all the other provinces of Europe together had only ninety. Moreover the Teutonic province had only forty-eight men's houses. The significance of this will appear when we contrast it with England, where there were forty men's Dominican convents to only one (Dartford) nunnery. This, according to Denifle, explains why mysticism, sporadic elsewhere, became endemic in the Dominican order, and especially on the Rhine, where Strassburg alone possessed seven nunneries. These *docti fratres*, from preaching Scholasticism to male audiences, were led more and more into mystic language in

their sermons to women, and thence among the laity in general. Thus the cold evidence of statistics and of monastic legislation brings the most striking corroboration to what Goethe had seen with poetic penetration: this movement which stirred all Europe, passing up and down the Rhine and thence by the ordinary trade routes, was truly "the scholastic of the heart".

First and most celebrated is Meister Eckhart [1260]-1327. His mysticism rests on a scholastic method of terminology, which in his many vernacular writings he translated as best he could into the language of the people. Denifle strongly repudiates the idea of opposition between mysticism and scholasticism. On that point, as we shall see, our own Rolle is rather exceptional than normal. Eckhart's system starts from something very like John the Scot's conception of God: so great that, on the one hand, no human attribute can be applied to Him: so overwhelming that we can not even attempt an approximate definition except by a series of negations: and so great also that He is immanent in all things, interpenetrates the whole universe, yet (as Eckhart tries, whether logically or not, to maintain) is always above the universe. He says: "God is neither this nor that." "God's simple nature is formless of form, unchanging of change, beingless of being, thingless of things; and therefore it spreads forth into all things in this changing world, and all finite things find their last end in Him."<sup>3</sup> Confronted with the difficulty of putting his thoughts into the vernacular, he was consciously epigrammatic, writing without subtle qualifications, and therefore easily misunderstood. As De Wulf puts it: "To say the least, he borders perilously on Pantheism." In 1326 he was condemned by the Archbishop of Cologne; he appealed to the Pope, but died in the next year. In 1329, twenty-eight of his propositions were condemned by John XXII; that which was most strongly condemned ran: "The eye with which I see God is the same as the eye with which God sees me." This Godlike Eye is, in effect, the *Scintilla* of Aquinas, which goes back to Augustine and the Neoplatonists and is continued by Juliana of Nor-



wich as "the Godly Will". Eckhart calls it *Seelenfünklein*, "Spark of the Soul". In his system, at the apex of the mind there is a divine spark, which is so closely akin to God that it is one with Him, and not merely united to Him. In his earlier views, this Spark was created; but his later doctrine is that it is uncreated, the immanence of the Being and nature of God Himself. "Dies Fünklein, das ist Gott", he says once. This view was adopted by Suso, and (with modifications) by Tauler, and became one of their chief tenets.

Heinrich Suso (1300-63) lived in the Dominican friary at Constance, where he made himself a little cell and oratory in what was scarcely more than a cupboard under the stairs. This convent, built out into the lake, is nowadays the celebrated Insel Hôtel. His *Autobiography* and his *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom* can both be bought cheaply in English. He "wrote them in German", he said, "because he had thus received them from God"; but, he adds, "one thing, however, a man should know, that there is as great a difference between hearing himself the sweet accords of a harp and hearing another speak of them as there is between the words received in pure grace and that flow out of a living heart, through a living mouth", and those same words when they come "to be set down on dead parchment, especially in the German tongue; for then are they chilled, and they wither like plucked roses: for the sprightliness of their delivery, which, more than anything, moves the heart of man, is then extinguished, and in the dryness of dry hearts are they received. Never was there a string, how sweet soever, but it became dumb when stretched on a dry log. A joyless heart can as little understand a joyful tongue as a German can an Englishman!" "Especially in the German tongue!" Even Latin, the language of Church and of philosophers, is insufficient. How much more so, then, is the vernacular, hitherto almost unused except for poetry! It is precisely this vernacular, the simple language of popular poetry, which constitutes both Suso's literary charm and his theological weakness, from the point of view of strict orthodoxy. This translation of scholastic ideas into the vernacular forced even the

writer himself out of his traditional groove; and here, from him, the ripple broadened among the people. So Professor De Wulf, though he insists that Eckhart *meant* in an orthodox sense, writes: "In this way [Eckhart's teaching] contributed *indirectly* to that debasement of religion which culminated in the Reformation"—in other words, to the breakdown of conservatism in religion. Thus a mystical movement is always followed by a freethought movement, through the impulse it gives to individualism.

From these Continental examples, which form a necessary introduction, we may pass on to one English life which illustrates, better perhaps than any exposition of doctrines, the individualism which is essential to mysticism. The Church had become too strictly collectivist. Since John XXII (d. 1334), it had become a heresy and a matter for burning that Franciscans should wear the kind of garment they might want to wear. Therefore minds of strong individuality escaped from this into the mystic life, where they could breathe freely apart from that all-controlling influence of the official clergy; a life strongly unsacerdotal, though not as yet antisacerdotal.

For Richard Rolle of Hampole (d. 1349) we possess, fortunately, a biography written in view of his canonization.<sup>4</sup> He was born in the diocese of York, and sent to Oxford at the expense of Thos. Neville, Archdeacon of Durham. His interests there were mainly theological; but at the age of eighteen he felt the hollowness of the world, and came home. Here began a career of which we must not measure the eccentricity by modern standards only. Rolle begged of his sister, to whom he was united by close affection, her white and grey frocks. "When therefore he had taken them, he forthwith amputated the sleeves of the grey one, and cut off the buttons from the white one, and sewed together as best he could the sleeves of the white tunic, so that they might be to some extent adapted to his purpose. Then he put off his own garments and put on the white frock next his skin; over which he put the grey frock with the amputated sleeves, thrusting his arms through the holes which this amputation had made; then he drew over all this a rain-cloak [with hood]; in order

that to some extent, after his own fashion, he might shape himself roughly into the likeness of an hermit, so far as was possible at that moment. When his sister saw this she was filled with amazement, and cried: 'My brother is gone mad, my brother is gone mad!' At which words he drove her from him with threatening gestures, and fled forthwith without delay, lest his friends and acquaintances should lay hands on him." Thence Rolle went into a neighbouring church, and was found absorbed in prayer in Lady de Dalton's pew; this is perhaps our earliest documentary notice of a private pew in an English church. She came in to Vespers; her servants would have turned him out; but she "of her humility" would not suffer this man's prayers to be interrupted. When, after Vespers, she arose from prayer, then her sons, who were Oxford men, cried: "Why, this is the son of William Rolle! we knew him at Oxford." Next day (which was the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary), unauthorized and uninvited, he put on a surplice and helped in the services of Matins and Mass; this he might legally do, having received clerical tonsure as an Oxford undergraduate. But then, at sermon-time, having asked first the priest's blessing, he got up into the pulpit, and preached to the rapture and amazement of the whole congregation. Sir John de Dalton, examining him privately and satisfying himself of his sanity, gave him a proper hermit's dress, and a cell for his abode. Thenceforward we sometimes find him wandering abroad and preaching: but on the whole it may be said that he spent the rest of his life in ascetic exercises and contemplation, with religious talk or writing, in this and other hermitages. His writings are philosophically less original than those of the rest whom I have mentioned, and certainly less scholastic: he constantly sneers at the learning of the schools. What external influence he had was probably derived, through Anglo-Norman religious poems, from the Parisian school of St-Victor. We see in him a lovable, loving man entirely absorbed in religion, but with neither the force of Eckhart nor the poetry and passion of Ste Catharine of Siena. His mind (must we say?) was as well meaning, but scarcely more orderly than that

hermit's dress made out of the two frocks. Yet his emotional and poetic mysticism, and his commentaries on the Psalter, became popular among monks and recluses, if we may judge from the preponderance of surviving copies from monastic libraries. The Austin Canon Walter Hilton [d. 1395] is more nearly parallel to the great Continental mystics; his *Scale of Perfection* became and remained a devotional classic second only in popularity to the *Imitatio*: he "is perhaps, in his mingled practical and transcendental teaching, the most typical mystic of the English school", which everywhere laid far more stress on devotion than on philosophy.<sup>5</sup> The anchorite Juliana of Norwich [1343-1413] was the first English literary woman known to us. Again, it was for a recluse that an anonymous author of the same time wrote *The Cloud of Unknowing*, whose popularity is attested by numerous surviving MSS., and whose literary and pietistic merit is remarkable. Margery Kempe of Lynn, who was thought to have been a recluse when only a small fragment of her book was known, is now discovered to have been something very different. As a middle-aged and then as an elderly married woman, she was even more unconventional than the youthful Rolle. For years she led the life of a religious tramp, bearding bishops and allowing herself many eccentricities which, in conjunction with her puritan objection to swearing and lying, brought her more than once into serious suspicion of Lollardy. Her autobiography should be read by all who are curious to explore the byways of Chaucer's England.<sup>6</sup> One passage may be quoted for its close concordance with the world-outlook, almost at the same moment, of Langland in his cot on Cornhill and St Bernardino in his mission work throughout Tuscany. Margery, when once she had been converted from a worldly past of which she writes with Bunyan-like repentance, spent all the rest of her life "with great sobbings and sighings after the bliss of heaven . . . so much, that she could not well restrain herself from speaking thereof; for wherever she was in any company she would say oftentimes: 'It is full merry in heaven!' And they that knew her behaviour beforetime, and now heard her speaking so

much of the bliss of heaven, said to her: 'Why speak ye so of the mirth that is in heaven? Ye know it not, and ye have not been there, any more than we.' And were wroth with her; for she would not hear nor speak of worldly things as they did, and as she did aforetime." So also Langland and St Bernardino were troubled by those who believed in nothing higher than the roof of their own house. We must go back beyond the dawn of history if we wish to find an age in which the sensitive soul did not say "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward", and the careless did not reply "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die".

Almost as interesting from another point of view is Rulman Merswin (1307-82), the rich and patrician banker of Strassburg. Converted late in life, he devoted his fortune to founding a religious community, and pleaded strongly (as Nicholas Lyranus had pleaded with more hesitation a generation earlier) that heaven must somehow be opened to good Jews, of whom he had doubtless met many in his business career. There is possibly some significance in the facts that two English writers, Langland and Juliana of Norwich, were also specially concerned with the same problem of Jewish or heathen salvation, and that St Thomas More inclined also towards the merciful side. This contrasted strongly with the ordinary orthodox view, as expressed by the Austin Canon Mannyng of Bourne. He complains, in his popular didactic poem of *Handlyng Synne* (E.E.T.S. 1901, p. 298), that not only some "lewd folk" but, what is more to be deplored, some priests say of the Jews "we wot not whether they be saved or no". He writes: "certes they are all in error, and in the faith they are not clear; for shall never Jew that dieth Jew of heaven bliss have part nor proof, but he be christened in the Holy Ghost, and in the sacrament be full steadfast." I have quoted this at far greater length in *Social Life in Britain* (pp. 47ff.).

We may trace, therefore, two more or less distinct currents of mysticism. First, the older school of St Bernard and the Augustinian Canons of St-Victor outside the walls of Paris. This school found its continuation in the *Deutsch Theologia*

(a sort of *Imitatio Christi* which strongly influenced Luther), in the Parisian Chancellor Jean Gerson, and finally in Thomas à Kempis. It is marked by docility, regularity and loyalty to the old ways; but it had much of that broad and unsectarian feeling characteristic of mystics in general, among whom we may often read whole pages without meeting any proof that the author is Christian or Mohammedan, Buddhist or Hindu. Again, there was the younger mysticism of the friars, as shown in the Fraticelli and the Dominicans from Eckhart onwards; men who struck out a line so bold as to promise a conflict with conservatism. Intermediate between those we may put Cardinal Nicholas Cusanus (d. 1464), who combined very wide reading and bold speculation with the most zealously loyal intentions. He was deeply influenced by Eckhart; and, as De Wulf confesses: "We may say of him as of Eckhart, that he preserved his orthodoxy only at the expense of his logic." He was accused of teaching the identity of the Creator and Creation by one of his contemporaries; and a century later Giordano Bruno's bold and outspoken pantheism was avowedly based on the "divino Cusano". The cardinal himself, however, pressed negative arguments only in order to arrive at positive results. And when, in 1453, all Europe was dismayed at the fall of Constantinople, Cusanus took this as his text for toleration in religion (*Dialogus de Pace*). Christianity (he pleaded) is the supreme religion, but in all we may find some rays of the Eternal Truth; let men therefore live at peace one with another. We have here, perhaps, the furthest point at which medieval orthodoxy ever arrived in pursuit of that thesis sentimentally defended by Rulman Merswin and Langland, with some slender and vague support from the Schoolmen, that God must somehow find a way of His own for bringing the good Jew or pagan to heaven.<sup>7</sup>

In these mystical movements we may trace that steady stream of religiosity among layfolk which Professor R. W. Chambers has so admirably brought out, on its literary side, in his *Continuity of English Prose*. Georges de Lagarde, again, has described it with great penetration and sympathy, laying stress upon its pathetic striving in the thirteenth and four-

teenth centuries for a true return to the Apostolic Age, and its significance as a presage of religious revolution in the sixteenth.<sup>8</sup>

This is the natural point at which to deal with a subject not directly mystical, yet closely allied: namely, the influence of the friars on popular thought, and especially that of the Franciscans.

It cannot be a mere chance that Innocent III, who in 1209 (or 1210) had authorized St Francis's venture among the poor, not without great searchings of heart, should have taken advantage of the great Lateran Council in 1215 to strive for a higher standard of religious education in the parishes. Other forces were at work simultaneously; but certainly there was a remarkable movement round about the turn of the twelfth century. All through the thirteenth, we find an increasing flood of popular religious works, competing as directly with the ordinary minstrel—the writers own prefaces sometimes tell us this explicitly—as modern religion has begun to compete with the picture-palace. St Francis had told his disciples to be God's gleemen—*joculatores Dei*. He himself is recorded to have preached one of his most remarkable sermons from the text of a French love-song: and one of his early disciples, Brother Henry of Pisa, resolved that "the Devil should not have all the best tunes", and turned current love-songs into hymns. Again and again, men not only composed manuals to aid the popular preacher with skeletons of subjects and hints of style, but collected also *The Alphabet of Tales*, *The Mirror of the Unlearned*, and scores of similar compilations of anecdotes for pulpit use. To Dante, this system had already become wearisome in its exaggerations; and Chaucer's contemporary, the Dante-commentator Benvenuto da Imola, echoed his master's condemnation of "the fables that are proclaimed yearly from the pulpit on this side and on that".<sup>9</sup> But this, however regrettable in theology, was on the whole advantageous for literature. Whatever style the friars encouraged, it was certainly not, until in their decadence they became wearisome, that one style for which, according to Voltaire, there is nothing to be said—the *genre ennuyeux*. And

here, just about the year 1200, we have in English literature perhaps the best example in Europe.

The book *Ormulum* was so named by its author Orm, a priest and monk. He set himself to remedy the scandal that the laity scarcely ever understood a single word of the Gospel recited at Mass: even St Francis, with his native Italian to help him and his familiarity with the most educated class in one of the most cultured regions of Europe, understood the Mass-Gospel only "to some extent". Therefore (writes Orm):

*I here have turnēd into English gospel's holy lore. . . .*

*If English folk, for love of Christ, it wouldē gladly leernen . . .*

*This have I into English turnēd for their soulēs needē;*

*And, if they cast it all away, it turneth them to sin.*

His version is in rhymeless lines of invariable accuracy, 8 and 7 syllables to the line and 15 to the couplet; perhaps he counted them on his fingers, like Milton's friend. He has his own orthography, denoting a short syllable by a double consonant. He undertook to translate all the 52 Sunday Gospels, with a brief patristic exposition of each; this would have taken him at least 80,000 lines. But this unique MS. contains only 10,000; evidently he never lived to finish it; and there is no trace elsewhere of his peculiar spelling. I print a specimen textually in the notes; here, it is more convenient to modernize.

Matthew iv. 1, 2 runs as follows in the late fourteenth-century version printed by Miss Paues: "Then Jesus was led into the desert through a spirit, there he should be tempted of the devil; and, when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he hungred."

In *Ormulum*, this runs to 16 lines, nearly three times as many syllables:<sup>10</sup>

*Forthright so Jesus baptized was*

*He went him into wastē*

*The Gospel saith that he was led*

*Through Ghost into the wastē,*

*And that, for that he shouldē there*

*Be tempted through the devil.*



*And Christ remained in wastē land  
 For that he wouldē fasten;  
 And he took then to fasten there  
 As he was in the wastē.  
 And all withouten meat and drink  
 Held Christ his fastē therē  
 For forty dayēs all on end,  
 By dayēs and by nightēs;  
 And when his fastē ended was,  
 Then lusted he for foodē.*

In comparison with that, let us take St Francis's Sermon to the Birds, or indeed any other chapter at random from the *Little Flowers*, or the *Mirror of Perfection*. There, with but little actual quotation from the Gospel, is the true Gospel spirit: yet here, in *Ormulum*, for all this monk's pains to give us the full Gospel words, the thing is as dead as any good and well-meaning man could make it. It has the chill, the stuffiness of a cell, while the early Franciscan records have all the freshness of the open air. Nor need we to go to Italy for the contrast: we may take the *Luve Ron* of Friar Thomas of Hales, definitely later than Orm, but not so very much later.<sup>11</sup> A girl had asked him to write her a love-poem for Christ, and he started from the reminder of the perishableness of earthly glory:

*Where is Paris and Heleyne  
 That weren as bright and fair to see?  
 Amadis, Tristam, and Dideyne,  
 Yseult, and allē they?  
 Hector, with his sharpē mien  
 And Caesar, rich of worldēs fee?  
 They be y-gliden out of the reign  
 As the sheaf is from the cleē.*

So we may probably interpret that somewhat obscure last line, remembering how *cleē* is still a common word in Shropshire, for instance, for *hill*: "The Reaper Death has gathered all the great folk, and left the hillside bare."

Nor was the impulse given to art less noteworthy than this new spirit in literature. In Italy, the great new friars' churches,

preaching-halls with almost unlimited wall-space, invited painting on a hitherto unwonted scale. At the same time, the new and brilliant mass of legends—here, again, especially the Franciscan, definitely more naïve and picturesque than the Dominican—challenged the painter and sculptor, while they left him a free hand; for here were no formal traditions or time-honoured conventions that he was professionally bound to follow. If in England the change was not so great as in Italy—for our own friars' churches were not quite so different in style from their predecessors—yet at least there were a considerable number of new buildings and, especially, a greater profusion of stained glass. The author of *Piers the Ploughman's Crede* notes this in the typical Franciscan church of Chaucer's time :<sup>12</sup>

*With windows well y-wrought, and wallēs well high,  
That must be portray'd and painted and polished full clean  
With gay glittering glass, glowing as the sun*  
in which the generous donor shall see his own figure kneeling before Christ,

*And Saint Francis himself shall folden thee in his cope,  
And present thee to the Trinity, and pray for thy sinnes.*

In the Dominican church, again,

*Wide windows y-wrought, y-written full thick,  
Shinen with shapen shields to shewen about,  
With markēs of merchants y-mingled between,  
More than twenty and two twice y-numbered,  
There is none herald that bath half such a roll.*

While even the refectory has "windows of glass, wrought as a church".

So, again, in *Piers Plowman* itself, the friar pleads with the rich lady :

*We have a window a working, will stand us full high;  
Would ye glaze the gable, and grave there your name,  
In Mass and in Matins for meed we should sing  
Suddenly and soothly, as for a sister of our Order.*<sup>13</sup>

Every considerable town, almost, had its friary, and many, like Cambridge and Lynn and Norwich, had all four orders. Nearly all the surviving Dooms, vivid and compelling repre-

sentations of the Last Judgment at the west end of a cathedral or over the chancel-arch of a parish church, date from after the coming of the friars. And, as already hinted, the *Hundred Meditations* of St Bonaventura's Franciscan disciple inspired not only paintings and carvings but still more, perhaps, the religious stage. There was thus a crescendo of action and interaction. The player caught sparks from the artist and the artist from the player, until both had reached the fullest development that was possible on the traditional medieval lines; and then the Renaissance, with its greater freedom from gild conventions, was welcomed alike by the artists and by their public. What killed Gothic art was not the Reformation, but a gradual change in the whole world-outlook, and the inextinguishable love of novelty in the human mind. All through the Middle Ages, the artist had worked not only in the creative spirit, but also in that competitive and destructive mood which will never be completely separated from the instinct to express one's own individuality. Splendid thirteenth-century work was destroyed to make room for the new fashions of the fifteenth: more than half of the Romanesque windows in our cathedrals have been broken away for the insertion of Perpendicular tracery. At the Renaissance, already before 1500, classical details were becoming fashionable in England; and this invasion was far completer on the Continent. The amount of Gothic architecture destroyed at the Dissolution of our monasteries was less considerable than that which had been destroyed in consistently Roman Catholic countries like France and Austria, even before the French Revolution. Westminster and Canterbury, Durham and Norwich and Ely, show incomparably more of the medieval monastic architecture than those Continental abbeys of which some are still the greatest in the Western World—St-Denis, Cluny, Marmoutier, Fulda, Melk, Farfa or Monte Cassino.

#### 41. THE PEASANT SAINT

When, on the verge of the Reformation, a German sympathizer with the land-toilers quoted Christ's words in John xv. 1 : " My Father is [a] husbandman ", he had been anticipated in the spirit of that theme, generations earlier, by our English Langland in his *Piers Plowman*.

This poem has come down to us in three versions, labelled by scholars as A, B and C. Each can be dated fairly exactly by its historical allusions. A was written not earlier than 1362 or 1363; B was continued, patched and padded out, not earlier than 1377; and C was patched and padded again, possibly as early as 1393, more probably about 1398 or 1399. The manuscripts give no hint of multiple authorship, and there is a strong similarity of style between all three versions. Thus the natural assumption is that all are by the same author; and this is strengthened by the fact that wherever the author speaks of himself these separate allusions are consistent with each other. Moreover, in one manuscript of the fifteenth century the authorship is definitely ascribed to one William Langland; and this manuscript contains the full, or " C " text. Therefore, although distinguished scholars have lately ascribed the poem, in the state in which we have it, to five different authors, the weight of authority is at present in favour of the conservative view; and, in any case, for the purpose of this present chapter it matters little whether we owe the poem to one single man or to such a like-minded group as, for instance, Carlyle, Emerson and Ruskin.

The poem entitles itself " The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman ". Who then was William, and who was Piers Plowman? The second question is the easier to answer. He is, in the first place, the working man who gives that plain answer to the riddle of life which the official Church and State had failed to give; the man who guides

Humanity to the shrine of Saint Truth. In brief, we may describe him as Carlyle's Peasant Saint. Thence, by an evolution very similar to that of Beatrice in Dante's poem, this Plowman stands for Humanity at its simplest and truest and highest; that is, for the human nature of Jesus Christ. Thence again, by a transition almost inevitable in the Middle Ages, Piers Plowman stands for Christ's successors, Peter and the Popes. The identity of William (or, as he calls himself in the poem, "Long Will") seems a good deal clearer now through the researches of Canon Bannister, Mr A. H. Bright and Professor R. W. Chambers. He was the son (as one manuscript tells us) of Eustace de Rokayle, and his home was Ledbury, under the Malvern hills. He may well have taken his name from the farm of Longlands in the neighbouring village of Colwall; and he was probably illegitimate, the son of a peasant girl, and therefore born in bondage. It is significant that in the "C" text we find an alteration which confesses that Holy Church made him a free man, the most natural interpretation of which would be that his clerical orders brought about his legal emancipation. He had influential friends, who died in youth; we know, in fact, that Eustace de Rokayle, tenant of Hugh Despenser, died in 1349, when Langland would have been just emerging from his teens. His relatives refused the help he had expected from them, and it is quite possible that our Long Will may be that William of Colwall who was ordained to the lower clerical orders in 1348. He was unsuited for field-work. He tells us that his long figure makes it difficult for him to stoop. He got some help from a neighbour, very likely Sir James of Brodibury; and, after a year of suffering through famine on the countryside (1354 and 1355 were such years), he drifted off to London. But the poem, naturally enough, contains many allusions, direct or indirect, to his native Malvern.

Thus he would be an older contemporary of Chaucer, and his life would fill roughly the years 1330-1400. The Black Death of 1349 would naturally account for his lack of friends as he grew into manhood; and he looks back regretfully not only to misfortunes in his youth, not only to lost

chances, but to wasted opportunities also. His conscience tells him "thou wert lief for to learn, but loth for to study". He had very likely begun as choir-boy or charity-boy at a monastic school: there was one priory at Little Malvern just over the hill from Colwall, and another, much more important, at Great Malvern. We find him writing:<sup>1</sup>

*For if heaven be on this earth, or ease to any soul  
It is in cloister or in school, by many skills I find.  
For in cloister cometh no man to chide nor to fight,  
But all is buxomness there and books, to read and to learn;  
And great love and liking; for each of them loveth other.\**

A sentiment which need be none the less sincere for being borrowed from Peter of Blois (Ep. XII, *ad fin.*)

Of course *school*, in this passage, includes university as well as grammar school. The reality of medieval university life, as we have seen, was less idyllic than this: Oxford High Street is, in fact, one of the minor battlefields of history. But this yearning idealism would be natural enough in a man who had lost his own early chances, and who wrote like Charles Lamb, "defrauded in his young years of the sweet food of an academic institution". The monastery, also, was often less idyllic, as Langland shows us in the very same passage from which I have quoted. There he goes on to describe the monks of his later life as habitual breakers of their own Rule, careless of the poor, and even of their own churches, where they allowed the rain to drip through the roof upon the altar; and this leads him to a prophecy which, after the great religious revolution, enthusiastic Protestants seized upon as inspired:

*But there shall come a king, and confess you monks and nuns,  
And beat you, as the Bible telleth, for breaking of your Rule;  
And then shall the Abbot of Abingdon, and all his issue for  
ever,*

*Have a knock of a king, and incurable the wound.\**

Those, however, were the monks of his later life: those of his youth had been better. He describes their discipline as not

\* Throughout this chapter I abridge and modernize freely in order to avoid frequent explanations. Buxom (German *beugsam*) means "pliable", "obedient".

unreal.<sup>3</sup> He is far more tender to the monks than to the nuns or friars. We may take it that he had learnt religion in his youth from men who deserved the title of Religious; that he might claim to have seen with his eyes and to have handled with his hands true Christianity, after which mere shallow scepticism was impossible. We see in him a man profoundly disillusioned, yet thoroughly religious; and, in spite of the claim of later enthusiastic reformers, he hated the Lollards of his day as much as he did the imperfect clergy.

But (he writes) "Fortune failed me at my most need"; and he is now living "in London and on London both", in a cot on Cornhill. It needs much imagination to imagine a thatched hovel on that spot; but there it was that Langland dwelt nearly six centuries ago, with Kitte his wife and Kalote his daughter. He was a cleric in lower orders; "The tools that I work with", he says, "are *Dirige* and *Placebo*." Those were the opening words of the anthems for Matins and Evensong respectively at a funeral service; our modern *dirge* is simply a corruption of *dirige*. Such recitations at funeral services for the souls of departed kinsfolk were open to all clerks in lower orders; and his contemporaries knew perfectly well from this confession that he was one of the multitude who eked out a more or less scanty existence by all kinds of small clerical jobs. He describes himself as a mere educated beggar, rewarded commonly by a meal in the kitchen; "my bag is my belly"; yet he is rich in precious experience of life. Over and over again, some phrase or single word testifies to a past heartache. He might have said of his own heart, as George Herbert said of his, how in the cauldron of Christ's blood

*It was dipt and dyed,  
And washed and wrung; the very wringing yet  
Enforceth tears.*

Knowledge, he tells us, comes through suffering. The high road to learning runs through the gate of "suffer both well and woe"; and if we would stand like God, above all earthly changes, then we must first learn "to see much and suffer more".

"Who suffereth more than God?" quoth [Reason]: "No person, I believe" . . .

"To see much and suffer more, certes," quoth I, "is Do-Well."<sup>4</sup>

His best successes had come from failures rightly taken. He laments his youth gone, his money lost, his friends dead or estranged, and perhaps some dearer losses still; but he knows that he has gained the pearl of price. For (as he says to Conscience who is examining him)

. . . I confess

*That I have lost time, and time misspended—*

*And yet I hope, as he that oftentimes hath traded*

*And ever hath lost and lost, till at last, by some good hap,*

*He bought such a bargain that he was better for ever—*

*For the Kingdom of Heaven is like to a treasure hid in a field—*

*So hope I to have some day, of God the Lord Almighty,*

*A gobbet of His grace, and so to begin a time*

*That all times of my time to profit shall turn.<sup>5</sup>*

Thus, his highest note of poetry comes from the struggles and failures of his life. The whole poem testifies to his love of beauty, to his lust of the eye. He is an enthusiastic and a curious observer of trees and flowers, beasts and birds, of the sights and sounds of the forest and the seashore; yet now from day to day he tramps the sordid streets of London. He hints at love in youth, and certainly he had a high ideal of marriage; but he confesses himself ill-mated. He loved learning; he was greedy of all writings and sciences, yet he was too poor to buy books or to pay for study. All this time, however, he goes on like Matthew Arnold's Scholar Gipsy—

*Still nursing the unconquerable hope,*

*Still clutching the inviolable shade,*

waiting always for "the spark from Heaven to fall", and at heaven-sent moments committing to paper stray scraps of his philosophy concerning this world and the next.<sup>6</sup>

The modern reader can scarcely realize how difficult it is to speak of an "edition" of any medieval book, or even of an "authentic text". After Professor J. M. Manly's exhaustive



study of all the existing MSS. of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, it is one of his most definite conclusions that there never was any one standard text, to the exclusion of variants. Authors often lent their writings piecemeal to friends; then patched them and altered, and lent them again to others who again copied them; so that the poet himself, confronted with the parallel texts printed by the Chaucer Society, would probably be unable to choose any one as representing accurately his final choice. If this was so with the comparatively wealthy and leisured Chaucer, how much more difficult was the task of authorship for Langland, a typical specimen of the "learned proletariat"? In his day, it would cost just about as much to get a respectable fair copy of a book made as, in our own, to print an edition of 500 copies. Thus it is natural enough that we should find, in *Piers Plowman*, an incoherence which constitutes the real difficulty of the poem, apart from the fact that the language itself approaches far less closely than Chaucer's to that of the Court and the City, and is therefore far less modern. In so far as we can condense Langland's message into a few words, we must sum it up as a long search for three degrees of excellence in life—Do Well, Do Better, and Do Best. In one passage he sums this up: *Learn* does well, *Teach* does better, *Love* does best of the three: we may express them in Latin as *Disca*, *Doce*, *Dilige*.<sup>7</sup> Yet, even after this summing-up, we have page after page of miscellaneous, and often confused, discussion. In short, this Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman presents a medley comparable to the six paper bags from which Carlyle professes to have selected his *Sartor Resartus*: scraps "ranging from metaphysical discussions to washing-bills and advertisements".

We may trace, in fact, a close resemblance between Langland and Carlyle, and a remarkable contrast between him and Chaucer. Chaucer was a well-to-do citizen, courtier and great poet; Langland had as violent an inferiority-complex as Carlyle. He tells us how he was reputed a madman for not reverencing "lords and ladies and persons in fur and silver". Chaucer, again, was fastidious; not only with the delicacy of

the courtier, but with that of liberal and artistic culture to boot: he disliked crowds, and preferred to study man in the individual. Langland, on the other hand, loved a crowd, especially a London crowd, as heartily as Lamb did. Jusser notes how his descriptions of multitudes are not only vivid, but characteristic: each of his crowds has an individuality of its own. Those differences of taste are symptoms of deeper mental divergences. Chaucer, with his interest in the individual, generally stops short of the deepest problems of humanity, or just studies them for a moment and dismisses them lightly as insoluble. Langland loved not only the man, but Humanity. "Christ on his Cross", he writes, "made us all blood-brethren"; and what interests him most in humanity is the vastness of the issues which depend on our brief, struggling, uncertain life of probation on earth. Chaucer took life as he found it. To him, the world was Vanity Fair in Thackeray's sense, and his moral was very much like Thackeray's: "Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for the play is played out." To Langland, it was Vanity Fair in Bunyan's sense—a place of continual struggle and real danger. He saw no possibility of taking the world as we find it. Rather, he nourished the perpetual question: "How can I leave it a better world?" Here, again, we may be reminded of Carlyle's "nay, by God, Donald, but we must help Him to mend it!" In short, Chaucer is so great a poet that he cannot help being a real moralist; and Langland is so intense in his moral convictions that he sometimes rises naturally to a true height of poetry. Even the most beautiful of his descriptions of nature (and he does show the keenest sense of the beauty, as well as the mystery, of this visible universe) leads him to ponder sadly, like Wordsworth, on "that which man hath made of man". For instance:

*Birdēs I beheld that in bushes madē nests,  
Had never wight wit to work the least.  
I had wonder at whom, and where, the pie learned  
To lay the sticks in which she layeth and breedeth;  
There is no wright, as I ween, should work her nest for pay;  
If any masun made a mold thereto, much wonder it were . . .*

*But that most movēd me, and my mood changēd  
That Reason rewarded and rulēd allē beastēs  
Save man and his mate.<sup>8</sup>*

He loved sweet sights and sounds as much (if we dare say so) as Chaucer; yet, above all and beyond all, he was haunted by a sense of sweeter harmonies unheard, fairer visions unseen, greater realities unrealized. Even more than Dante he was possessed with the conviction, so widespread among thoughtful men in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, that the world was morally and religiously bankrupt, and drawing fast to its end. To him the City of God is already in flames; flames which cast their lurid glare upon every human face he sees—a conflagration which forms the perpetual background of all our life—so that our slightest actions and most insignificant gestures cast shadows which stretch up to the very stars. Here we have no abiding City; this is the City of Destruction. We cannot flee from it altogether, as Bunyan did; yet at least let us flee from the destruction that is in it. We may fairly compare Langland also with the Samuel Butler of our own day: no ascetic, but a born rebel; a man waging irreconcilable warfare with everything that cannot justify itself, either by truth in fact or by truth to social morality; a man who did not care how much he contradicted himself, so long as he could keep his own standpoint in constant contradiction to that which he felt to be false, whether intellectually or morally: wayward, paradoxical, impossible for an absolute guide, but most stimulating in all that he has to tell us.

To have mentioned Langland even for a moment in the same breath as Dante may be felt to require some justification. Superficially, perhaps, it is rather a contrast than a comparison. Dante's great poem has all the characteristics of a cathedral like Amiens or Salisbury, wonderfully complete in conception, harmonious in execution, and elaborate in detail; in a sense he may be said to have put all Scholasticism into his poetry. Langland, on the other hand, worked only by scraps and patches. We could have guessed that, even though he had never confessed it; and his nature is as essentially Eng-

lish as Dante's is Latin. He is far less anxious for the harmony of his whole than for truth of detail. He struggles less to frame a whole working theory of the universe than to drive home those truths of which he does feel absolutely certain, leaving the reader to co-ordinate as best he may. Yet in one essential point the two stand out unsurpassed in medieval poetry. Carlyle said of the *Commedia*, "at bottom, this is the sincerest of poems". Langland, though immensely inferior in learning and art, yet, like Dante, put his whole life into his poem; at every word the pen was dipped in his heart's blood. Thus, all through, he was mainly concerned to hammer in, with almost wearisome repetition, the truths of which he himself was most convinced. Over and over again he recurs to three main points; the dignity of Poverty; the paramount importance of Truth; the everlasting significance of Christ's sacrifice for mankind.

*Poverty*, because he himself was poor. As Carlyle says of Luther: "I find it altogether suitable to his function in this earth . . . that he was born poor and brought up poor, one of the poorest of men." Langland has the deepest pity for "prisoners in pits and poor folk in cottages, Charged with children and with chief lord's rent". "The poor," he says, "are God's minstrels";<sup>9</sup> and, again:

. . . *Jesus Christ of Heaven*

*In a poor man's apparel pursueth us ever . . .*

*For on Calvary of Christ's blood Christendom gan spring  
And brethren we became there in blood, and gentlemen each  
one.*<sup>10</sup>

If sometimes he seems to be praising the poor for mere poverty's sake, he never leaves us long in doubt. He always reminds us that those whom he admires are the good poor, the good maimed and halt: these men "have their purgatory here on earth".<sup>11</sup> He seems out of sympathy with the Peasants' Revolt of his time, and with negative rather than constructive levelling socialisms;<sup>12</sup> yet his hero, his saint, is the perfect peasant.

As to *Truth*, he repeats three times in different places his

own motto: "When all treasures are tried, Truth is the best." Truth, indeed, is God Almighty, Lord of Heaven and earth

*For he is father of faith, and formēd you all,  
Both with fell and with face, and gave you five wits  
For to worship Him therewith the while that ye be here.*

Therefore Truth is the highest shrine and goal of our pilgrimage here on earth. In one of the earliest and most striking scenes of the poem, he describes men as awakened to sin by the scourge of plagues and wars, a multitude crying to God *Who shall show us Truth?* "blustering forth as beasts", and helpless to find their way. Then suddenly upon the scene comes the professional religious wanderer, his hat garnished with such pilgrim-tokens as we may still buy in facsimile at Canterbury, tokens from Rome and Jerusalem and St James of Compostela. The pilgrims seize eagerly upon this man: "Where is the shrine of Saint Truth?" The professional shakes his head; that is a saint he has never heard of. Suddenly, at this moment, a plowman puts up his head from behind a hedge; and this is our Peter, our hero, who, first in his simple peasant form and then as Christ and the Popes, will accompany us throughout the rest of the poem.<sup>13</sup> Piers is ready to guide men to this shrine; but that simple monosyllable, Truth, the moment we attempt to realize it, is found to contain the most complicated ideas. "What is truth? said jesting Pilate." How can we of the fourteenth century reconcile the facts of life with the Church's dogma, which itself is so inescapable a fact in our lives? How can we reconcile the doctrine of Papal Indulgences with the Gospel doctrine that men will be judged according to their fruits? How can we reconcile the good lives of many Jews and pagans with the strictness with which the Church excludes almost all of them from God's mercies? How (deeper still) can we reconcile the origin of evil with God's goodness, and predestination with freewill? It is all these difficulties that bring us to our third point, the author's emphasis on Christ's Redemption.

For, after all these innumerable disquisitions, he always recurs to that subject. Confessing the weakness of theology

and philosophy, he falls back on plainer and more practical points; above all, on that wherein he finds the breadth and height of all theory, with the solidity and stability of all practice; the *Life and Passion of Jesus Christ*. Over and over again, with growing emphasis as the poem proceeds, and as his metaphysical discussions bring him back to the old insoluble problems, he recurs to this plain point, and on that high note he ends.

We may trace this evolution in a bird's-eye view of the whole poem. The author first falls asleep on Malvern hills and dreams of a Field Full of Folk; he contemplates that wide eastward view, almost unrivalled in England, which stretches to Edgehill. Hard by, he sees a Castle on a Cliff, and a Den in the Dale, answering exactly to Eastnor Castle on the high ground and that other of which nothing but the moat now remains in the swampy flat under the Herefordshire Beacon. There it is that Langland sees these swarming multitudes; high and low, good and bad; a medley ending with a living picture of a London crowd, with its cries of the cooks and the taverners who would stampede us in to eat and drink. What is the meaning of this Castle on the Cliff and this Den in the Dale? A fair and noble lady, clad in white linen, comes down and tells him:

*Son, seest thou this people . . . ?*

*The most part of this people that passeth on this earth,  
If they have worship in this world, they want no better;  
Of other heaven than here take they no tale.<sup>14</sup>*

The Castle (she says) is the abode of Truth, God's Castle; this Dungeon is the Devil's, wherein he holds the wicked as his prisoners. It is very probable that Bunyan had read Langland, or at least heard tales from him, and that we here have the original of Giant Despair and Doubting Castle. But, to continue:

*Then had I wonder in my wit what woman it was  
That such wise words of holy writ shewed,  
And asked her by the High Name, ere she thence went  
What she were certainly, that taught me so fair?*

"Holy Church I am", quoth she, "thou oughtest me to know,

*I fondled thee first in my arms and the faith taught,\*  
And thou broughtest me pledges, my bidding to fulfil  
And to love me loyally while thy life endureth."*

*Then I bent on my knees, and cried her of grace,*

*And prayed her piteously pray for my sins,*

*And also lead me truly on Christ to believe,*

*That I might work His will, that wrought me to be man,*

*"Teach me to no treasure, but tell me this same thing*

*How I may save my soul, for sacred are thy words."*

*"When all treasures are tried", quoth she, "Truth is the best;*

*It is as precious a prize as dear God himself.*

*Whoso is true of his tongue, and telleth nought but that,*

*And doeth the works therewith, and willeth no man ill,*

*He is a god, by the gospel. aground and aloft*

*And alike to our Lord, by St Luke's words:*

*My mother and my brethren are they that keep the word of God."*<sup>15</sup>

Then, if Truth be God, will not Holy Church help the dreamer to distinguish true from false?

*"Look upon thy left side, and to where they stand!  
Falsehood and Flattery, and many more their friends."*

*I lookèd there to my left side, as the lady said,*

*And there was I ware of a woman in rich and royal weed.*

*Crownèd with a coronet, no better hath the King,*

*Her fingers rich with rubies, as red as burning coals.*

*Her array ravished me; such richness saw I never;*

*I wondered what she was, and whose wife she were."*<sup>16</sup>

This, says Holy Church, is Lady Meed; that is, Reward, a word constantly used in the evil sense of ill-gotten gains and bribery. Lady Meed, in fact, is the medieval Almighty Dollar; she and her friends rule the world.

Then Langland sleeps and dreams again. In this second dream, things seem a little better. All the Seven Deadly Sins confess and repent—a splendid series of pictures for our

\* The "C" text here reads: "And free thee made."

satirist. They want to live well for the future—to live according to Truth. But where is Truth? Here it is that the professional pilgrim and Piers Plowman crop up. That man, in the strength of his fifty years of honest work and faith in God, undertakes to guide the multitude to Heaven. All want his guidance, lords and ladies, lawyers and labourers; and presently Piers gets a "pardon", an Indulgence, straight from God, like the Pope's own.<sup>17</sup> A priest here intervenes:

*"Piers," quoth a priest then, "thy pardon must I read,  
For I will construe each clause and teach it thee in English."  
And Piers at his prayer the pardon unfoldeth,  
And I, behind them both, beheld all the bull.  
All in two lines it lay, and naught a leaf more,  
And was written right thus in witness of truth  
And those who have done good will go into eternal life  
But those who have done evil will go into everlasting fire.  
"Peter!" quoth the priest then, "I can no pardon find  
But 'do well and have well, and God shall have thy soul,  
And do evil and have evil, hope thou none other  
[But] after thy death-day, the devil shall have thy soul!"  
And Piers for pure pain pulled it in twain  
And said, Though I walk through the valley of the shadow  
of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. . . .  
The priest and Perkyng opposed one another,  
And I through their words awoke, and waited about . . .  
Meatless and moneyless on Malvern hills,  
Musing on this dream of mine; and my way I went.  
Many times this dream hath made me to study  
Of that I saw sleeping, if it so be might,  
And also for Piers the Plowman full pensive in heart,  
And which a pardon Piers had, all the people to comfort,  
And how the priest impugn'd it with two proper words . . .  
And how the priest proved no pardon to Do-Well.  
Yet deemed I that Do-Well Indulgences passeth . . .  
And passeth all the pardon of St Peter's Church.  
Now hath the pope power, pardon to grant the people  
Withouten any penance to passen into heaven;  
This is our belief, as lettered men us teacheth*



Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, etc.,

*And so believe I loyally, (Lord forbid else!)  
That pardon and penance and prayers do save  
Souls that have sinned sevenfold and deadly.  
But to trust to these pardons, truly me thinketh,  
Is naught so sure for the soul, certēs, as is Do-Well.  
Wherefore counsel I you that be rich on this earth,  
Upon trust of your treasure pardons to have  
Be ye never the bolder to break the Ten Commands.  
And specially ye masters, mayors and judges  
That have the wealth of this world, and for wise men be  
holden*

*To purchase you pardon and the pope's bulls!  
At the dreadful doom, when the dead shall arise  
And comen all before Christ, their accounts for to yield.  
How thou leddest thy life here and His laws kepest,  
And how thou didest day by day, the doom will rehearse;  
A pocketful of pardons then, nor Provincials' letters,  
Though ye be found in the fraternity of all the four Orders  
[of friars]*

*And have Indulgences double-fold, but if Do-Well you help  
I set your patents and your pardons at one pie's heel.*

This was, indeed, as serious a problem in Langland's day as in our own. Henry of Ghent (d. 1293) was one of the greatest philosophers of his age. Just a century before Langland expressed those difficulties, he was saying much the same in his own academic language. In the 15th of his *Quodlibeta*, or General Discussions, he considers the question "Whether Indulgences may be taken at their face value": *Utrum Indulgentiae Praelatorum tantum valeant quantum sonant*. Must we really believe (he asks) that, so long as the recipient is contrite and confessed, an Indulgence of 40 days (for instance) is worth exactly the same to a worse man as to a better? Some men argue that there is a real difference in those two cases; that this pardon means more to the worthier recipient, but that the Church offers the same face value to both. Thus "by a certain pious fraud, she

preaches to all men a greater value than [such pardons] have for many men, in order that she may thus attract them to earn at least somewhat of the Indulgences". This, he feels, is a pernicious doctrine. He admits that Indulgences are nowhere explicitly mentioned in the Bible, but feels that, the system having grown up in the Church, "we must firmly believe that Christ conferred general powers on this head, even though [the prelates] have received none in special words". Some doctors, comparing the Pope's power with that absolute authority wielded by the Emperors of Rome, argue for the absolute face value of everything that they grant. Thus, even "if the prelates so inordinately remit the penalties due to sin, or so lavish their Indulgences, that men set such trust in these abundantly and easily earned Indulgences as to be altogether called away from works of penance, satisfaction, and mercy, yet that which they [the prelates] remit is remitted before the face of God, and that which they indulge is in fact indulged, and this without any work being enjoined [upon the penitent]; or if some trifling work be enjoined which tendeth not to the honour of God or the profit of the Church; as, for instance, if the Pope should say to a man: 'Pick up the blade of straw from the earth, and, of the plenitude of Our power, We remit or indulge unto thee all penalties due for thy sins, whereunto thou art bound to God'." To this Henry answers: "Whether that be so, God knoweth: I know not"; and we may well understand how our English scholar-tramp Langland could more easily state than resolve so knotty a problem.<sup>18</sup>

Here, then, is a climax; and at this point comes the great change of scene upon which, together with other reasons, some critics would base a change of authorship. Yet the break here is really no greater than what we have already seen after Lady Meed's marriage; and the remainder of the poem still maintains its earlier character. It tells of the long search after Dowel, Dobet,\* Dobest. We now have a series of religious disquisitions, all sorts of problems with very little formal

\* *Bet* is the true English comparative of *well*: our modern *better* is a pleonasm, like *worser*.

answer. The poem itself, indeed, admirably exemplifies what the author cites as one of the characteristics of his own day :

*I have heard high men eating at table*

*Carping, as they clerkës were, of Christ and of His mights*

*And lay faults upon the Father that formēd us all. . . .*

*" Why would our Saviour suffer such a worm in his bliss,  
That beguilēd the woman, and the man after . . . ?*

*Why should we, that now live, for the works of Adam  
Rot or suffer torment? reason would it never."*

*Such motives they move, these masters in their glory,  
And maken men to disbelieve that muse much on their  
words.<sup>19</sup>*

That view, however popular, is essentially superficial which treats the Schoolmen and preachers and mystics—or, often enough, the Schoolmen alone—as all-important for the history of medieval thought. Indeed, if we were compelled to neglect one class of witnesses, it might even be less dangerous to turn away from these official teachers than to ignore those numerous, though far more modest, witnesses who give us occasional glimpses into the mind of the multitude. By all means let us study what was hatched in the lecture-room or the cloister or the hermitage; but let us also try to realize what the more ordinary man thought in London streets. And here, as elsewhere, the poem of *Piers Plowman* does very faithfully speak for the man in the street. The ordinary Englishman, in his more serious and enquiring moods, did not visualize himself as living under an omnibeneficent ecclesiastical authority which harmonized all faith and reason for him. If he thought for himself, if he tried to digest all that he heard and to make it into flesh and blood of his own, he was beset by much the same difficulties, under different outward forms, as those which beset the religious thinker of to-day. Moreover, he had learned by bitter experience the danger of trusting too implicitly to the official teacher. For (says Langland)

*It seemeth now soothly to the worldës sight*

*That Goddës word worketh not on learned nor on lewēd,*

*But in such a manner as Mark meaneth, in the Gospel*

While the blind leadeth the blind, both fall into the ditch.\*

Therefore (he proceeds), let these "correctors" (the hierarchy) first correct themselves, and then the lower clergy will cease to call their superiors, as they call them now in Chaucer's England, "dumb dogs". Thus in those days, as now, the ordinary enquiring soul had to work out its own salvation. At every point Langland finds himself brought up against some weighty uncertainty; but at every such check he falls back upon Christ and the Cross. This comes out most clearly in the last three cantos of the poem, which deserve a summary to themselves. These show Langland's most continuous height of poetry; we need not characterize them, as we must the earlier cantos, with Horace's description, "scattered fragments of a poet". On that account, therefore, these are the cantos which stand least in need of modernization; the strength of his feeling guides him to such plain and forcible words as were destined to outlive the ravages of time. On the other hand, they give no idea of his strength in comedy.

We must here remind ourselves of the evolution of *Piers Plowman* from the Peasant Saint to Superman, to Godhead in the Flesh, and finally to Christ's successors. The poem here forms a pageant. To Langland, as to Chaucer, miracle-plays were full of suggestion; and it is characteristic that Chaucer should have been mainly impressed by their comic side, Langland by their tragic. His picture of the descent to hell, for instance, may be seen in many medieval paintings, as at the south-east corner of King's College Chapel, Cambridge, and in the miracle-play of the "Harrowing of Hell".

Here, then, one Palm Sunday, Langland found himself shirtless and wet-shod, like a beggar, again on Malvern hills. There again he fell into a dream mingled with boys' voices, the organ, the cry of *Hosanna!* and *All Glory, Laud and Honour*, that Palm Sunday hymn which is still popular to-day. He saw in this dream how

\* B. x. 274. This text, as Langland gives it in Latin, is not in Mark; it is quoted loosely from Matthew or Luke.

*One semblable to the Samaritan,\* and somedeal to Piers the Plowman*

*Barefoot, on an ass's back, bootless came pricking.*

*Eagerly he lookēd, as a knight to win his spurs.*

*Then lookēd Faith from a window, and cried: "Ha, son of David!"*

*As doth a herald of arms, when a knight cometh to joust.*

*Then I asked of Faith, what all that fare bemeant;*

*"What shall joust with Jesus" (quoth I), "Jewēs or Scribes?"*

*"Nay" (quoth he), "the foul fiend, and false doom and death."*

Then follow the incidents of the Passion, most vivid in general conception, though the details are not always correct; for instance, the vinegar and myrrh which were passed to our Lord upon a sponge are described here as a poison which was offered Him.

*It is finished, quoth Christ, and commenced for to swoon.*

*Piteously and pale, as a prisoner that dieth,*

*The Lord of life and of light laid his eyen together.*

*The day for dread withdrew, and dark became the sun;*

*The wall waggēd and clave, and all the world quakēd.*

*Dead men for that din came out of deepē gravēs,*

*And told why that tempest so long time endurēd:*

*"For a bitter battle", these dead bodies said,*

*"Life wageth with death in this darkness; the one fordoeth the other,*

*And no wight shall see certainly which shall have the mastery Ere Sunday about sunrising." Therewith they sank to the earth.*

The scene changes now to the Lower Regions. We see a vast and gloomy cavern, with a dim light in the background, and two fair maidens, one coming from the east and one from the west. These are the Mercy and Truth of Psalm lxxxv: "Mercy and Truth have met together; Righteousness and

\* The Good Samaritan was one of the few Gospel parables that were ever portrayed in medieval churches; it was taken to typify Christ the Saviour.

Peace have kissed each other." Truth asks: "What means this din, with the darkness and the dawning light behind?" Mercy answers, but Truth disbelieves. Then comes Righteousness and Peace from the north and south respectively. The same debate follows between them, and the same incredulity. Meanwhile the light is broadening, and Peace quotes: "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Righteousness is still incredulous, but here at last the Voice Itself breaks the silence, coming from that light and addressing the gates of hell: *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.* For a while, the infernal parliament hesitates in anxious debate. Then the Voice sounds again, nearer and louder, till it compels attention and answer: "What Lord art thou", quoth Lucifer, "that callest at the gate?"

*"Lo, the King of Glory", the light soon said,  
"And Lord of might and of main, and all manner virtues.  
Dukes of this dim place, anon undo these gates,  
That Christ may come in, the King's son of heaven."  
And with that breath hell brake, and Belial's bars were  
loosēd.*

*Patriarchs and prophets, the people that walked in darkness,  
Sang aloud St John's song: Behold the Lamb of God,  
And those that our Lord lovēd, into His light be caught,  
And said, "Lo, my soul to amend for all sinful souls.  
Now, Satan, beginneth thy guile against thyself to turn.  
Thou that art doctor of death, drink the draught that thou  
madest;*

*For I, that am Lord of life, love is my drink.  
And for that drink to-day I diēd upon earth.  
I fought so, me thirsteth yet, for man's soul's sake;  
Yet may no drink me moisten nor my thirstē slake  
Till the vintage shall fall in the vale of Jehoshaphat,  
That I must drink full ripe at the rising of the dead.  
And then shall I come as a King, crownēd with angels  
And have out of hell all human souls.  
And for thy lying now, Lucifer, that thou liedst to Eve*

*Thou shalt abide it bitter"; and bound him then with chains.  
Many hundreds of angels then harped aloud and sang.*

*Then pipēd Peace of poesie a note:*

*"After sharp showers", quoth Peace, "most sheen in the sun;*

*Is no weather warmer than after watery clouds;*

*Nor no Love liever nor friends more firm of heart*

*Than after war and woe, when Love and Peace be masters.*

*Let no people then", quoth Peace, "perceive that ever we  
chid;*

*For impossible is no thing to him that is almighty."*

*"Thou sayest sooth", quoth Righteousness, and reverently  
her kissed,*

*"Peace and peace here", said she, "world without end!"*

*Truth trumpēd then, and sang Te Deum Laudamus,*

*And then luted Mercy, in a loud note,*

*"Behold how sweet and joyful to dwell together in unity!"*

*Till the day dawned, I saw these damsels dance.*

*Then rang the Resurrection bells; and right with that I wakēd,*

*And callēd Kit my wife, and Calote my daughter,*

*And bade them rise and reverence Goddēs resurrection,*

*And creep to the cross on their knees, and kiss it for a jewel;*

*For God's blessed body it bare for our boot,*

*And it afeareth the fiend: for such is its might*

*There may no grisly ghost glide where it walketh.*

The author sleeps again on Easter Day and has a fresh vision, a continuation of the last. Christ appears to him in the armour and blazonry of Piers Plowman (that is, in His human nature), painted all bloody with his victorious fight. Then comes the Day of Pentecost; the Holy Ghost in the likeness of lightning lighting on the Apostles' heads; and thenceforward Piers Plowman is St Peter; the power has passed to a mortal ruler. Grace (for the poem, like Bunyan's story, is full of impersonated virtues and vices) prophesies trouble to come after Christ's death. Piers Plowman (now, that is, the Pope) is appointed by Christ as "my steward and my reeve on earth". He is given the four evangelists to plough with. The seed that he is to sow is the four cardinal virtues, and he has a barn to harbour his grain in, the barn

of Truth, built with the timber of the Cross, and entitled "Unity, that is Holy Church". Piers then goes forth to plough. The powers of evil attack him, and colour belief so quaintly with their sophistry that good and evil are hopelessly confused together, both in faith and in practice. Therefore Conscience hastily summons all true Christians into this true barn, this Unity, in defence of Holy Church. This brings about a momentary revival, but men are found readier to bewail their sins than to amend their lives and make restitution. Antichrist now musters his powers of evil for a desperate assault. The monks and friars join in with him, all but a few poor "fools" who choose to suffer for their spiritual folly; an evident allusion, as we have seen, to the persecution of the "Spiritual" friars by their relaxed brethren. Then, at the prayer of Conscience, Nature sends a plague to teach men better lives. There is indeed a brief diversion, but relapse soon follows. The battle is renewed; and now the worst enemies of Holy Church are found to be the clergy themselves. The friars, in especial, offer their help, but they turn out to be mere traitors. Their so-called spiritual remedies are quack drugs, stupefying the sense of sin and personal responsibility. Antichrist, seeing this, attacks all the more fiercely. Cries of despair arise: Where is Contrition? where is real sorrow for sin, through which alone we can get God's grace? where is that Contrition whom we have set to keep the gate of our citadel?

*"He lieth and dreameth", said Peace, "and so do many others;*

*The Friar with his physic this folk hath enchanted,  
And plastered them so easily, they dread no sin."*

We are now only seven lines from the end of the poem, and there seems no room but for despair. If we ended here, we should say that Langland, like Gerson in the next generation, is ready to cry to the world: "our age has neither faith nor morals"; or, again: "the Church is eaten up with an incurable cancer, and the very remedies do but make her sick."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, an able critic of to-day, Mr Christopher Dawson, has actually made that strange mistake. He writes:



"It is characteristic of the Nordic strain in Langland's poetry that his Christian epic should end, like the *Volospa* and the epics of the heathen north, on a note of defeat and despair—with the vision of a final battle for a lost cause against the unloosed hosts of hell." What Langland actually says in those last seven lines is very different from this. For him, no truth can ever become a "lost cause". At an earlier point of the poem, it is true, Mr Dawson could have written those words with more justice. He can there say truly: "In despair Langland calls on his fellows, the common people, to make a last stand for the cause of Catholic unity:

*. . . Come with me, ye fools*

*Into Unity of Holy Church, and hold we us there,*

*And cry we to Nature, to come and defend*

*Us fools from the fiend, for the love of Piers Plowman,*

*And call we to the commons, that they come into Unity*

*And there abide and do battle against Belial's children."*<sup>21</sup>

But to break off and end there is to mistake the real man and his whole poem: for at this despairing point we are still thirteen pages from the end of the book. In those remaining pages the visionary poet, contrite and confessed, takes refuge in Unity, but only to find that this fortress is being besieged not only by Antichrist but also by false clergy, a hundred of them dressed in dissolute lay attire with long daggers at their belt; these are backed up by sixty more "cursed priests of the marches of Ireland", who blaspheme and attack so fiercely that they "hadden almost Unity and Holiness adown". Conscience therefore welcomes the friars into Unity, as allies; but he finds these to be mere flatterers, quack-doctors of souls; they drug into helpless stupor the very porter of the gate, upon whom all depends! We have here that curse of the Prophet Micah, "a man's enemies are the men of his own house"—*inimici hominis domestici ejus*. Up to that point the words *defeat* and *despair* may truly be used; for, under the searchlight of bitter experience, that minority of truly spiritual folk are apparently now exposed as "fools". All their trust had reposed upon Unity, and Unity is now exploded. It has shown itself not as true unity for the love of Piers Plowman

(that is, of the Christ-Man), but as an ideal of unity which is being betrayed by its own most trusted children. It seems now to be that hollow unity which Jeremiah lamented in Israel: "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"<sup>22</sup> Here, then, at the worst need, is where our poet shows his true spiritual greatness. He is possessed by a living conviction of that truth which lies at the root of Christianity and which had carried the Cross to conquest under the pagan persecutions; the truth that victory may be wrested from what seems the most hopeless defeat. For Langland, as Jusserand has said with perfect truth, is one of those rare thinkers who are consumed with burning enthusiasm for sober and moderate ideals. At the core, this hesitating dreamer is as solid as the most dogmatic extremist. He is sensitive to all evil, and fearless to face it, yet invulnerable in his faith, since the breakdown of outer bulwarks drives him only to more direct communion with the mystic message which speaks straight to his own heart, and which he can no more disbelieve than he can disbelieve in his own existence. If indeed true religion seems to be dying out from the Visible Church, yet the Kingdom of God is always within us. If, in that which claims to be the One True Fold, Christ is daily crucified afresh, then let us shake the dust from our feet, and go forth as pilgrims—if so it must be, as solitary pilgrims—in search of the Christ that is to be. How far? Over the wide world, till we have found what we seek, or till the night comes. That is the burden of these last seven lines, when once the situation has been recognized, humanly speaking, as hopeless: "*By Christ*", quoth Conscience then, "*I will become a pilgrim,*

*And walk on, as wide as the world lasteth,  
To seek Piers the Plowman,\* that Pride may be destroyed,  
And that Friars may find their guerdon who flatter for greed  
of gain,*

\* I.e. Christ in His true relation to struggling humanity.

*And contradict me, Conscience. Come, Nature, avenge my  
wrongs,  
And send me good hap and health, till I have Piers the  
Plowman",  
And then he groaned after Grace, till I 'gan awake.*

Here endeth the dialogue of Peter the Plowman.

If, therefore, we are to sum up with Mr Dawson, it can only be in a far wider sense than he himself seems to intend. He writes: "Here is the Catholic Englishman *par excellence*, at once the most English of Catholic poets and the most Catholic of English poets: a man in whom Catholic faith and national feeling are fused in a single flame. He saw Christ walking in English fields in the dress of an English labourer, and to understand his work is to know English religion in its most autochthonous and yet most Catholic form." The equivocate lies here in that common but loose habit, often fatal to historical accuracy, of using the simple word *Catholic* to distinguish the Papal Church in especial; although (as Cardinal Gasparri has recently told the world in the Pope's name) this should scientifically be called *Roman Catholic*, since (argues the cardinal) "the word 'Roman' was precisely the expression which distinguished the Catholic religion from all other Christian confessions".<sup>23</sup> In the widest sense, Piers Plowman is indeed very English and very Catholic. But, if we aim at strict historical accuracy, and insert *Roman* into these sentences, they will not do at all. Langland represents the Englishman whose tie to Rome was fast loosening: the man who was already beginning to feel it equally difficult to do without organized religion or to do with it, and who was (as we shall soon see again) in serious doubt about Indulgences. It is this man's spiritual descendants who, in St Thomas More's day, will make it possible for the Spanish ambassador to write from London "nearly all the people here hate the priests". Langland was a worthy precursor of those Anglicans who not only accept the Creeds, but pray regularly for "the good estate of the Catholick Church", of which they esteem

themselves members. Langland is pre-eminently Catholic in the sense that he belongs to that great world-wide type which, in all ages and countries, has stood out from the confused and shifting mass of ordinary humanity. In him we may recognize the pagan Horace's "just and inflexible man", steady and undaunted even among the ruins of a collapsing universe. Again, he is the Anglican George Herbert's model, who "like season'd timber, never gives, but, though the whole world turn to coal, then chiefly lives". And, lastly, he anticipates the agnostic Henley's defiance of Fortune: "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul!" There is perennial interest in the true story of any man's feelings and beliefs; and this poem, with all its incoherence, under its accumulated rust and dirt of five centuries, is fresh and living even to-day. Indeed, it is now beginning to come to its own, and historians are increasingly ready to realize how direct a light is thrown upon modern religious and social problems by this almost unknown William, who faced honestly the difficulties and doubts of his age, and fought them all down; and who has left us the best of his experience and his reflections in the book we call *Piers Plowman*.

## 42. ARTIST LIFE

The medieval artist worked under conditions essentially different from the modern.<sup>1</sup> The modern is individualistic, and sometimes achieves a reputation by pushing caprice to its utmost limits. Medieval art, on the contrary, was strictly collectivist. The men who worked at the great cathedrals were under a discipline comparable to that of an army; indeed they were often actual conscripts. Quite apart from what might be done in the so-called Dark Ages, when the whole neighbourhood was at the mercy of each predatory lord, the kings of the later Middle Ages claimed and exercised the right of impressing masons, carpenters, and other artisans for whatever great work they had in hand. A warlike countess in eleventh-century Normandy brought in a celebrated mason to build her a stronger castle than he had built for any of her rivals, and then killed him to make sure of not being outdone in her turn. Chaucer, again, when Clerk of the King's Works, had to impress masons, just as other officers were impressing soldiers, to serve the king; and even the Chapels of Eton and King's College, Cambridge, were partly built by forced labour. In other ways also these great building schemes were carried on under an approximation to military conditions. The learner passed through an exacting mill in later, if not in earlier, times. Although royal castles like Caernarvon and Beaumaris seem to have been built with less foundation on the apprenticeship system than we should expect from any other gild, and Messrs Knoop and Jones have shown that there was something of the same laxity elsewhere in England, yet the fifteenth-century masons' codes show definitely that strict discipline was aimed at, if not always obtained. In Germany, again, at the end of the Middle Ages, rules seem to have been strictly enforced; and the masters of the masons' and carpenters' guilds gradually reinforced their own position,

and made it difficult for the ordinary workman to join their select society, by insisting on ever-increasing expense for his "masterpiece", whether in time or in money. We have a striking example of this gild discipline in the case of Jodocus Tauchen of Breslau, a distinguished carver who was boycotted for using methods of work which his fellows disapproved.<sup>2</sup> Again, as in war, materials were costly and manpower comparatively cheap. Moreover, the privations were shared fairly equally between officers and men; while the ordinary mason received a wage comparable to that of a modern taxi-driver, the master-mason himself was ordinarily paid no higher than a first-rate chauffeur in a wealthy man's establishment. Their fame, again, was rather collective than individual. The number of actual names which have come down to us, though they would make a long list, is very small in comparison with the vast mass of buildings and the multitudes who worked upon them. Even where the stones bear a banker-mark, which was the workman's sign-manual, that signature was seldom or never made in voluntary self-advertisement, but was imposed upon the workman by his clerk of the works or other superior who needed to check the quality or quantity of his labour. It was only with the Renaissance that the artist's signature became normal.

Thus the medieval artist's conditions differed very widely from those of the man of letters. In literature, apart from the extent to which the universities adopted the gild system, writers had as much individual freedom as was compatible with the ordinary social conditions of their time. Though there was a Gild of Meistersänger in Germany, and something similar at an earlier date in Flanders, England had not even the rudiments of a Society of Authors, apart from the quite different scribes' gilds, where the members did not compose, but only transcribed. Thus we find far greater differences of quality in this field. Though medieval art is not so uniformly good as some enthusiasts have told us, yet certainly it never sinks to so low a level as those poems which Chaucer ridiculed in his "Tale of Sir Tophas", or as we find in long passages from Lydgate ("the voluminous,

prosaic and drivelling monk" as Ritson called him) or in other rhymesters who wrote below even Lydgate's level. On the other hand, while no medieval artist sinks so low, yet none stands above the rest as Dante stands in literature; we might even add, perhaps, as Petrarch and Boccaccio and Chaucer stand, or Froissart and Matthew Paris.

Yet in some ways we may come closer to the medieval artist than to his brother the poet. Creighton has noted his ubiquity, if only we would look for him. Masses of what was almost beautiful in medieval architecture have perished; not in Britain alone but perhaps even more in those countries which were never seriously touched by the Reformation. Montalembert, the greatest of modern monastic panegyrists, reminds us that a Frenchman who wishes to see the medieval abbey in its completeness will find the best approach to this in an English cathedral close. In France, in Spain, in Italy, in Southern Germany and Austria, the destruction of monastic buildings by their own inmates was limited only by want of money. Bavaria is here a very striking example; it may be studied compendiously in Oefele's *Monumenta Boica*, where this eighteenth-century antiquary gives bird's-eye views of the rich abbeys from which he is printing his MSS., and which look more like modern workhouses or asylums than like their medieval prototypes. Throughout Europe, then, while the castle is commonly in ruins and the abbey is often ruined or rebuilt beyond recognition, the majority of parish churches are very nearly what they were in the Middle Ages; more so in England than anywhere else. Except the hills and streams, there is nothing to rival our churches in durability, even when we take account of those which have been (to borrow Ruskin's happy phrase) "utterly restored". And, quite apart from those rare and welcome inscriptions in which a mason has occasionally recorded his own name with pardonable pride, we find very frequently, wherever the restorer has not worked too thoroughly, these banker-marks which bring us face to face with the man himself. On page 395 will be found a conspectus of marks from St Nicholas at Lynn (1399-1419), which are repeated at other neighbouring churches.

There is also in Western art a greater continuity from imperial times than can be found in popular literature. The Roman gilds (*collegia*) seem never to have died out altogether in Italy; and certainly the Byzantine influence was definite. One of the commonest medieval terms for a mason was *lathomus* or *latomus* (Greek *λατόμος*). These Byzantine building conditions, following the trade routes, produced the so-called Romanesque architecture, which spread throughout Italy and then over the Alps, either due northward down the Rhine or north-westward through France and across from Normandy to England. There were no barriers in this mason-work comparable to the barriers of speech. Greek literature, for nearly all the Middle Ages, was almost unknown in the West; with Greek art it was very different. The man who at Constantinople had dressed marble or the finer stones could transfer his skill without much loss to the coarser stones of the West. Byzantine illustrators of the Bible or of Vergil, and those miniaturists who worked upon parchment, as their brethren worked in mosaic, have supplied models not only to medieval draughtsmen and colourists but for most of the Western carvers also. Those "Anglo-Saxon attitudes", with which Lewis Carroll has humorously familiarized us in their vivid mannerism, are directly copied from Byzantine illustrations of the Psalms or the Apocalypse.

Here, as in almost every other field, we must go back again to that European Renaissance of about A.D. 1000. Something of this revival was due to the fact that society had lived in constant expectation of Christ's second coming; an expectation which was frequently renewed by the occurrence of what seemed peculiarly significant events or dates. The Apocalypse, with the emphasis which it laid upon the thousand-year-long Reign of the Saints, focused men's minds naturally upon that year 1000. This is a factor which cannot be ignored, though it has often been exaggerated out of all proportion on the strength of the chronicler Ralph Glaber, who tells us of the feeling of rejuvenescence which came when those fateful years were passed; not only the thousandth from Christ's birth but also the thousandth from His Crucifixion.



We have already seen his words: "It was as though the very world had shaken herself and cast off her old age, and were clothing herself everywhere in a white robe of churches."<sup>3</sup> The chronicler was himself a Cluniac monk, writing in the early and great days of his own order, which had set itself 100 years earlier to reform European monachism: a reform which constituted one of the main currents of this Renaissance. Glaber's "white robe of churches" marks roughly the beginning of Romanesque architecture; a style which may be characterized as monastic in the sense that it was always ordered and paid for by the monks and, on very exceptional occasions, part of it was actually wrought with their own hands. But this monastic art was only an occasional by-product of the monastic ideal. St Benedict no more contemplated founding colonies of artists than of scholars. The monk's main business was to save his own soul, and incidentally, by the same process, to help others towards heaven. The so-called *Mirror of Monks*, in about 1100, insists that the cloisterer shall be like Melchizedek "without father, without mother, without kindred". Even the Franciscans, whose ideal was far more widely removed from that "holy boorishness" which St Jerome specifies as the monk's temptation, often slid into it unawares. David of Augsburg [1280] warns his younger brethren that it is their business to take no more notice of their fellow-men, except for purposes of religious edification, than if they were a flock of sheep.<sup>4</sup> St Bernard, more than a century earlier, had condemned much of the monastic art of his time as a waste of money and energy; as a sort of Judaic ceremonialism which was pardonable for the ignorant laity but with which the monk, under his deeper sense of religion, ought to dispense. Nearly every monastic reform showed something of this severe Puritan tendency. On the other hand, there were many monks who felt that their vast endowments could not be better employed than for the glory of God in painting and sculpture and music. That artistic school is admirably represented by the monk who wrote under the name of Theophilus, and whom modern research has identified with Roger of Helmershausen.<sup>5</sup>

This man was himself an artist, and wrote a manual for artist pupils, full of interesting details concerning materials and methods. He rises at one point to eloquent enthusiasm : "Cheered by these supporting virtues, my beloved son, thou hast approached God's house in all faith, and adorned it with such abundant comeliness. In illuminating the vaults and the walls with every diversity of handiwork, and all the hues of the rainbow, thou hast in a manner shown forth to every beholder a vision of God's paradise, bright as springtide with flowers of every hue, and with the fresh green of grass and leaves . . . whereby thou makest men to praise God in creatures, and to preach His wonders in His works. For the beholder's eye knoweth not where first to rest its gaze : if we look upward to the vaults, they are even as a mantle embroidered with flowers : if, again, we look upon the walls, there also is a kind of paradise ; or if we consider the light that streams through the windows, then we cannot but marvel at the priceless beauty of the glass and at the variety of this most precious work. . . . Labour therefore now, my good pupil, happy in this life before God's face and man's, and happier still in the life to come, through whose labour and zeal so many burnt-offerings are devoted unto God ! Kindle thyself now to a still ampler scope of art, and set thyself with all thy might to fulfil that which is yet lacking to the furniture of God's house, without which the Sacraments cannot be celebrated, nor God be served with due ministrations." Still earlier comes the description of Tuotilo of St Gallen by the chronicler of that house. "Tuotilo was supple and sinewy in arm and limb, the very model of an athlete. Ready of speech, clear of voice, a delicate carver and painter. Musical, with especial skill upon the harp and the flute ; for he taught the harp to the sons of noble families around. He was a crafty messenger, to run far or near ; skilled in building and all the kindred arts. He had a natural gift of ready and forcible expression in German or Latin, in earnest or jest ; so that the Emperor Charles once said : 'curses on the fellow who made so gifted a man into a monk.'"

This "monastic" period, then, was conditioned by the

patronage of the great abbeys, and sometimes by the artistic sense and direction of the monks themselves. The original workmen, on the other hand, were for the most part comparatively unskilled labourers; and even the master-mason was often too inexperienced to grapple thoroughly with the engineering problems with which his growing ambitions confronted him. Bishop Creighton had his own trenchant way of putting this: Our first question (he said) on being shown over any great Romanesque church should be this: "When was it that the central tower fell?" Among the multitude of miracles recorded in monastic chronicles and Lives of Saints, a considerable proportion deal with building accidents: for instance, a scaffold falls or a building collapses before it is finished, and (through the merits of such-and-such a saint) there is little or no harm done to life or limb. As the abbeys grew richer and their churches greater, the appeal to lay-architects became commoner. It was a vast effort of engineering skill which led from Romanesque to Gothic art, and which turned the heavy monumental building into a machine of marvellous construction in its adjustment of weights and thrusts, and even in its elasticity in face of expansion and contraction under heat and cold and in resistance to tempestuous winds. That evolution was due to lay-artists, and especially to the rivalry of bishops and their cities, determined to outdo the great monastic models. We can trace the transition among the few recorded names of masters. Henry III had as his royal painter a monk of Westminster, and Edward I had one from Bury St Edmund's; these are survivals from the old state of things. When we come to Edward II we find a very different royal painter. A precious fragment of the royal Household Account Rolls has come down to us, recording: "Item, paid to Jak de Seint Albou, Painter to the King, who danced on a table before the King's majesty and made him laugh beyond measure, 50 shillings in manner of gift through the King's own hands, in aid of Jak himself, his wife, and his children." Similarly Bishop Grosseteste [1240], among the statutes which he published for the orderly government of his diocese, commanded that painters should not be

allowed to grind their colours upon the altars of the churches.<sup>6</sup> Pigments in those days were bought only in the rough, and a marble grinding-slab was part of an artist's full equipment. The wandering painter could not easily carry this about, even where he could afford to possess it; hence the over-mastering temptation to utilize the great consecrated altar-slab.

Here then we have the lay-artist fully developed, working upon the church for his living, but sometimes far from ecclesiastically minded. He would lodge in the monastic precincts while the work was proceeding; but many anecdotes show us the friction natural to this period of transition. One of the most significant is that of St Stephen of Obazine, who, as a Cistercian, interpreted so strictly for himself and his own monks the Benedictine prohibition of flesh-food, that he would suffer no butcher's meat upon the premises, even for the use of these unfortunate hirelings who were guiltless of Benedictine vows.<sup>7</sup> He evidently reasoned: "Who builds good churches must himself be good"—a sophism which Dr Johnson had not yet arisen to explode. The workmen, loathing the daily round of herbs and pulse, secretly bought a pig and cooked it in the forest, bringing back the unconsumed remnants to hide at home. A little bird brought the news to St Stephen, who came round with several of his seniors, and discovered the abomination hidden betwixt two barrels in the masons' lodge. What should be done with this unclean flesh? The seniors counselled moderation, but the saint knew no compromise in such a matter; he cast the pork solemnly upon the dunghill, with every attendant circumstance of ignominy. The workmen, learning this, threw down their tools and proclaimed a general strike. St Stephen, after vainly arguing the question on moral grounds, fell back upon the employer's last resource in all ages, and assured them that he could get plenty of better men in their stead. No doubt the capitalist had a distinctly more favourable position in the twelfth century, as against the striking operative, than he has now; but we may also infer from other authentic evidence that St Stephen was one of those men whose real piety and charity are bound up with so plain a resolve to have their own way in

the long run, that men find it cheaper to grant it them at once. However this may be, the masons were presently "pricked to the heart", and "resumed the work, to their own profit and that of their souls". Equally significant in its own way is the story of the artist penitent of St Berchaire [1140].<sup>8</sup> This man had been dedicated as a child to monastic life, and the monks taught him art. When he grew up he ran away to neighbouring Châlons, where the bishop was building a new cathedral. Here he was well paid; but, after some time, the bishop incautiously took him in his train to Montier-en-Der, an abbey where St Berchaire lay buried. The monks, finding that they had here an artistic expert, persuaded the bishop to transfer him, and kept him not as a monk but as an indulged guest. They set him to carve a crucifix; but Christ, indignant to be fashioned by these polluted hands, smote him with sore sickness. This was evidently a fever; and what the monastic chronicler describes is plainly an artist's delirium. He besought them to clothe him in a monastic cowl and to pray round him. "Soon, therefore, a vast host of demons burst upon him, led by two more grisly than the rest, who rushed with savage violence into the sick man's chamber and strove with all their power to tear his wretched soul from his body. Yet, by God's merciful protection, there came a pause in their onslaught, wherein one of the demons reproached his fellow for his delay in bearing off this soul which they had come to snatch. The other answered that he was powerless against the protection of the most renowned martyr St Berchaire, whose holy bones were there buried and worshipped; 'Yea', said the first, 'and I can do nothing because I see him fortified with the Last Communion of the Body of Christ, and defended by the prayers of St Berchaire's monks.' Thus their dispute dragged on, while the poor wretch shuddered at the horrible tumult; when, suddenly and marvellously, while the sick man lay as a helpless spectator of all these things, there appeared a single Hand, which in its unspeakable mercy scattered the demons and put them to flight, thus, by God's commanding power, supplying the patient's weakness. . . . For, suddenly, on the label of the

crucifix which stood at the foot of the prostrate artist, there burst forth to his sight an ethereal globe surrounded with milk-white circles and adorned at certain marked points with shining stars. Here, by God's grace, the globe was seen to cleave in twain, and there shone in the midst of this division a heavenly queen, clad in fine-spun robes of so ineffable beauty that none could doubt her to be the Mother of God. Her sacred head shone with glory and bliss, and she moved downwards along the cross, gliding from top to bottom as on a track of beaten gold, and taking her seat as Mistress in the throne of Her Son. Then this most pitiful Virgin deigned to comfort this monk, broken in body by the grievous torments of his sickness, and in soul by the devices of these demons. 'Poor wretch!' she said, 'Lo! my Son hath been moved to mercy by my prayers and by those of His servant St Berchaire. He hath now granted thee a respite for repentance, that thou mayest return into the place wherein thou wast offered to God and to His saints, and mayest henceforth amend thy life as He would have it.' With these words she stretched out the hand of mercy in the face of the dismayed crowd of devils; then raised him from his couch, and left him in good health, eager to tell the bystanders the lamentable story of all that he had suffered and seen."

These stories will explain how, as architecture developed, it came more and more definitely into lay hands. It has been claimed that masons' guilds existed already in the twelfth century; but they do not come into full documentary light until 1260. St Louis had chosen a strong and upright man, Étienne Boileau, as Provost of the Merchants (i.e. Mayor) at Paris, in order to put an end to municipal corruption there. Étienne compiled a *Book of Guilds*, including that of the masons. There is nothing definite to differentiate them here from the corporations of other trades or handiworks. It is true that secrecy was enforced upon their members; but so it was in other guilds. Again, we can attach no mystic importance to the first syllable of the term "freemason". It seems practically certain that the original freemason was one who worked in freestone, i.e. the finer stones that lent themselves

to greater freedom of handling. Certainly the word "freestone" occurs earlier than the word "freemason"; and in documents where the latter is found it is generally in contradistinction from "rough-mason", "rough-hewer", "hard-hewer". Gradually, however, this gild did begin to present exceptional, if not unique, characteristics. To begin with, it was very specially concerned with the Church. We must not altogether forget castles and a few great houses; but the towns were built almost entirely of wood, and "the stone house" is sometimes a quite distinctive title; therefore the large majority of stone buildings were ecclesiastical, from the cathedral down to the little chapel of a hamlet. The mason, therefore, serving the Church in this way, would naturally enjoy more, if only a little more, of ecclesiastical favour and protection. Again, his was a wandering life. Only a few great towns had their small settled communities of masons; the rest wandered from job to job as they were required. I have shown elsewhere, in *Art and the Reformation*, how the fifteen masons who worked at St Nicholas at Lynn [1399-1419] can be traced at eleven churches round, one of them almost thirty miles distant. This nomadic life rendered them comparatively independent. In the town, if anything were wrong with a single workman, the gild could punish him; again, if the gild itself broke law or by-law, then everybody knew where to find it, and its funds could be confiscated in the last resort. It is no mere chance, therefore, that it was men of the building trades who were found more recalcitrant to those Statutes of Labourers by which parliament, after the Black Death, attempted to keep wages down. Wyclif complains of them as great offenders against those statutes; and, under Henry VI, the problem was important enough to call for parliamentary interference. It seems quite evident that the mason's gild of the later Middle Ages, while it was strong in fellowship between member and member, was as slippery as an eel in its relation to the civic authorities or to King and Parliament. Moreover, for these very same reasons it survived the general suppression of guilds at the Reformation. Freemasonry played a great part, therefore, in international

thought at least from about 1717 onwards and perhaps still earlier. There were on the one hand strong internationalist sympathies among the highbrows of different nations; we see it from Erasmus onwards; yet no open internationalist League of Highbrows was possible. No government would have allowed men thus to set up such elaborate communities of their own within, and yet apart from, the Great Community of the State. Here, however, in freemasonry, was something which, for some reason or another, attracted a few scholars, if only because they may have hoped to find here an ancient esoteric wisdom dating from Solomon and his Temple. At any rate, the fact is that highbrows gradually found their way into it. It may well be, as suggested in what is by far the best book on this subject, that the earliest non-working Freemasons had entered out of mere antiquarian or social inquisitiveness.<sup>9</sup> But, once inside, they can scarcely have failed to discover what chances this gave them for quiet interchange of thought; and thus Freemasonry would gradually become the considerable social force, efficiently organized for charitable and other purposes, which we know it to be in modern Britain. Elias Ashmole, founder of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, is the first who is known to have joined in this way (1646). But, before 1700, the practice had become relatively common. It was formally decided that men might be "Freemasons" in the new sense, without ever touching mallet or chisel; and the distinction was thus established between "speculative" and "operative" masons. Freemasonry, thus developed, was introduced into France by the Catholic and Jacobite Lord Derwentwater in 1725. The greater political freedom of Protestant countries has worked for tolerance between speculative Freemasonry and the State. Roman Catholic States, on the other hand, have always been irreconcilably opposed to such a body, as a thing contrary to the very essence of their being. Consequently, it has been condemned in five papal bulls, from 1738 to 1864, with the result that it is now scarcely possible for a Continental Freemason to be a Christian of any kind. In England, on the other hand, it was possible for a Catholic like Lord Petre to be at the same time leader in



the struggle for Catholic Emancipation and Grand Master of the English Freemasons.

The medieval craftsman was, according to modern ideas, very poorly paid. We must bear in mind, to begin with, that scholastic philosophers, following Aristotle, drew only one main distinction in art, between the "liberal" and the "mechanical". The former included all the "humanities", the latter included everything manual. There was, therefore, no essential distinction between the cobbler or tailor on the one hand, and Giotto or the Della Robbias on the other; indeed, in more than one place we find that the painters' guild was a mere branch of the saddlers', through the accident that the heavy wooden medieval saddles were often elaborately painted. Aristotle's point of view coincides probably with most men's feeling in our own generation, though it is far from regulating our general practice. The medieval artist, like the Japanese wood-engraver, was paid as an artisan, and generally expected no further reward than praise and the satisfaction in his own craftsmanship. Nor can we say, as has often been contended, that what the artist lacked in money was made up for him in general reverence for his art. Apart from what we have seen of his liability to the press-gang, we have explicit testimony for the attitude of the general public. When Dante put into his *Commedia* the brilliant miniaturists Oderisi and Franco, as types of the fickleness of fame, this attracted the notice of his distinguished commentator in Chaucer's days, the Bolognese professor Benvenuto da Imola. He tells us how "some men" marvelled that the great poet should thus immortalize "men of unknown name and low occupation", *homines ignoti nominis et bassae artis*. But herein, thinks Benvenuto, Dante showed his genius, "for thereby he giveth silently to be understood how the love of glory doth so fasten upon all men indifferently, that even petty artisans—*parvi artifices*—are anxious to earn it, just as we see that painters append their names to their works".<sup>10</sup>

Moreover we have the witness of formal documents. In 1384, when the master-mason of Troyes Cathedral married, the Chapter gave him a present of eight pints of wine and two

loaves of bread, but cut off his wages for that day. Here they were entirely within their rights. He and his fellows were bound to work from sunrise to sunset in the winter half, and from "a little after sunrise to nearly sunset in summer", without leaving their lodge "except to take a competent dinner once a day"; and apparently in case of absence from sickness the man lost his wages. Quicherat, who discovered these documents, writes: "The Chapter of Troyes kept its workmen under its absolute control . . . employing them as it chose for day-wages or for piece-work, prescribing what was to be done, and accepting the work only if it came up to the specified standard."<sup>11</sup> The account-book of Eton College Chapel tells the same tale. When, in 1448, Robert Goodgroom took a full hour for his dinner, he was fined half a day's pay, "for he would keep his hours, and never go to work till the clock smite". A little later the accounts report the fining of 21 other masons "because they would not go to their work till 2 of the clock; and all maketh Goodgroom!" Similarly, the account-rolls of Renaissance Popes show them sometimes setting first-rate sculptors to the drudgery of cutting cannon-balls, which in those days were more often made of stone than of metal.<sup>12</sup> Again, ecclesiastical hindrances might sometimes be not only negative, but active and positive. The register of Bishop Baldock of London, in 1306, contains a letter addressed to the Prior of Holy Trinity, Aldgate; a monastery which, later on, was Chaucer's next-door neighbour. The letter is headed: "For the matter of the Crucifix wrongfully carved."<sup>13</sup> It rehearses how a certain Tidemann of Germany has made for the Rector of St Mildred in the Poultry "a certain crucifix with a cross-piece quite contrary to the true representation of the cross . . . to which the indiscreet populace flocks in crowds as to a true crucifix, which it certainly is not: whence, as we foresee, grave peril might arise for their souls". Because the said Tidemann is said to be an alien and unlearned, and therefore naturally ignorant of "the traditional mysteries attaching to the true shape of cross and crucifix", therefore, when he has surrendered the bond for £23 which the rector has given him, he

may take away this crucifix now sequestered and guarded in your monastery—provided that he carry it away secretly and without scandal, before dawn or after dark, into some other diocese. Meanwhile he must take a solemn oath that "henceforth he will neither make nor offer for sale such deformed crucifixes in our city or diocese of London". The explanation of this may probably be found in a book written twenty or thirty years earlier by Luke, Bishop of Tuy in Spain. He writes with horror of the "heretics" who are now attempting to pollute the orthodox faith by "painting or carving ill-shapen images of saints, in order that by gazing on such images the devotion of Christian folk may be turned unto loathing. In derision and scorn of Christ's Cross, they carve images of our Lord with one foot laid over the other, so that both are pierced by a single nail, thus striving either to annul or to render doubtful men's faith in the Holy Cross and the traditions of the sainted Fathers, by superinducing these diversities or novelties." For the earliest crucifixes of all had never been realistic: the figure was draped to the feet, which were nailed separately. It is only in the thirteenth century that "complete realism is reached by the substitution of one nail in the feet, instead of two as in the old tradition, and the resulting crossing of the legs" (*Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 1908, IV, 529). The unfortunate Tidemann, if he had lived a little longer, would have seen his own fashion completely victorious; for though the old draped crucifixes survive here and there (e.g. at Romsey Abbey or St Étienne-de-Beauvais, where they were built into the wall, and could not be removed without great damage), they are a nine days' wonder to the antiquaries.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, even in the later Middle Ages they had become so unusual that the popular imagination created a new and strange saint out of them, a certain "Liberata" or "Wilgeforte" or "Uncumber", to whose image, as St Thomas More tells us, London wives would pray and offer oats at St Paul's Cathedral, where "in stede of Saint Wilgeforte [they] call her saynt Uncumber, bicause they reken that for a peke of otes she will not faile to uncomber them of their housbondes" (*English Works*, 1557, p. 194 b).

Both Boccaccio and his younger contemporary Sacchetti depict the painter as a man who neither enjoyed special public esteem nor took very special pleasure in his work. These instances, however, must not blind us to the inspiration and the fire which kindled the best of these men, and doubtless the rank and file also in their rarer moments. Legends of artistic rivalry are among the most picturesque in medieval records. In Britain the best known of these is that of the Prentice's Pillar at Rosslyn. In its usual form this tells how the master-mason, wishing to attain perfection, travelled as far as Rome to collect models and inspiration; but only to find that his apprentice, inspired meanwhile by love for a girl of his own age, had outdone the best that he himself could dream of. In his jealous fury he brained the apprentice with his hammer. A similar French story attaches to a tomb at St-Ouen-de-Rouen. Here is a great sepulchral slab which, as the inscription itself tells us, is that of Alexandre de Berneval, the master-mason who built the southern transept and died in 1440. The other figure is that of his son Colin, who succeeded him and built the northern transept, but whose descendants or friends neglected to chisel the inscription on the margin of the figure which he had prepared for himself. Each of these figures stands upon a lion; and from these beasts, facing each other, popular imagination had constructed already in the seventeenth century a legend of artistic jealousy and murder. Alexandre holds in his hand a model of his own beautiful transept window; therefore the story tells how this was the apprentice, and how the master, furious to be outdone, slew him in revenge.

As early as about 1250 we find a French master-mason, Villard de Honnecourt, compiling a book of drawings and hints for his pupils.<sup>15</sup> An English edition of this *Album* was published by Professor Willis; the drawings are of extraordinary interest. We see sketches from great buildings like Reims which he takes as models; again, designs of his own; again, studies of statuary or painting, wrestlers, warriors, dicers, animals of all sorts, from the grasshopper and dragonfly to the lion. He shows interest in and knowledge of

engineering problems; and, in his lighter moments, love of mechanical toys; for instance, a chafing-dish full of hot charcoal which may be held in the hands yet cannot possibly upset; or trigonometrical measurements either of the height of a tower or of the exact point on the ground where an egg may be placed in order that a ripe pear should fall upon it. Especially ingenious is his design of perpetual motion, which he introduces with the words: "Oftentimes do masters dispute" of this matter. Others of his drawings give us the same lively picture of these artists discussing weighty technical problems or lighter fancies over their evening wine.

As time went on, something like modern capitalism was developed. Henry of Yevele, who was designing and carving in the days when Chaucer was superintending and keeping building accounts, died worth two country manors and several houses in London. Professor D. Knoop and Mr G. P. Jones have worked out an admirable sketch of this man's career, with those of his associates, in the *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 1935 (vol. XLII, series 3, no. 14). Again, Thomas Drawsword, the "imager" of York, became sheriff of that city and in 1512 was elected to represent it in parliament. In these later generations the great men not only sold designs but also did a certain amount as contractors. It was this development, and its own over-ripeness, which killed Gothic art. The craftsmen had already run through almost every possible variation, and there was a natural craving for something new, when the Renaissance came in with its revival of Classic art. The real strength of Gothic had been as Morris described it; it was "the people's art". Everybody watched the men at work; everybody was interested in them, as the very children of our own day are interested in the motor-car and all its works. Everywhere there was a call for straightforward effectiveness, which inspired natural and simple treatment in general, while it left further room for the play of high imagination where religion required it, and where the artist or his prompter was equal to the task. In the case of these carvings and paintings, set there as a "Bible of the poor", and often at a considerable distance from the

eye, exaggeration was natural. Where Jacob is represented as confronted with Joseph's blood-stained coat of many colours, the artist is determined that nobody shall fail to realize an aged man in the extremity of grief. When Vasari, writing in the full tide of Renaissance criticism, praises a medieval artist, it is often for his violent expressiveness, e.g. for the pangs of seasickness in one picture, or Job's putrid sores in another. We have seen how St Methodius is recorded to have converted King Bogoris of Bulgaria by the lurid pictures of judgment and hell which he painted on the walls of the royal palace. It is natural that, in our own time, artists and art-lovers should look back regretfully at those simpler days when there was not only greater unity of status among the workmen, but more unity of spirit between them and their public. It was something like the literary spirit which travellers describe in the Farøe Islands and Iceland even at the present day; a culture truly living, yet so simple that all classes can share it. It was with true instinct that Morris put this into the foreground of his *Dream of John Ball*.

For satisfaction in his daily work, we have every historical reason to place the medieval artist's career high among workmen of all ages and times. We may see him in imagination tramping, singly or in groups, from town to town or village to village, without more fear of unemployment than that which has always haunted the wage-earner everywhere except in the imagination of a few historians. When great churches or castles were a-building, there was the masons' lodge for work and habitation and fairly congenial company. In the village, or the smaller town which in the Middle Ages was far less populous than very many modern villages, he would lodge at the tavern or with someone of his own class. His work was mainly straightforward, with little temptation to scamp it, since it interested everybody around. All masons had gone through sufficient apprenticeship, whether formal or practical, to please the public and themselves, among generations which had not yet grown tired of seeing things well and simply done, and had not begun to yearn for a change of some kind, were it only for the worse. The majority worked thus,

from youth to age, "along the cool sequestered vale of life". A few, on the other hand, had opportunities which gave wide scope to the most brilliant genius, if not so wide as that which the select few have found in later time. Experts are convinced nowadays that in miniature painting, for instance, originality constantly triumphed over convention, and that each of the different groups in which illuminations can be classified owes its existence to one genius, who created a new type for his own generation. Therefore, although Benvenuto and Sacchetti, together with the evidence of cold-blooded documents, compel us to deduct much from those exaggerations which we owe not so much to Ruskin and Morris as to their over-enthusiastic followers, we may still count the medieval artist as one of those who came as near to Arcadian happiness as was possible in a turbulent society. Why should he not be content, when he looked around him? His father or brothers were probably at the plough or the cattle-stall or the smithy. True, these had more chances of a settled family life than he; but his career was incomparably richer than theirs in the interest of travel and of experience among men and cities. In his spare time he drank with his equals at the inn or played with them on the green; his work was upon God's House, which everybody felt to be theirs also; and, if he died at his work, he was laid to rest under its shadow. Masons' tombs, recognizable by the emblematic square and compasses or other tools, could probably be counted by the score among those which still remain in our churches. Moreover, the finer and more self-conscious artists felt themselves champions of a great cause, no less than the modern scientist. This comes out even in the story of their quarrels. It is difficult to separate enthusiasm from rivalry, and rivalry from strife. The *Iliad* recognizes this in the exhortation of Hippolochus to his son.<sup>18</sup> "Strive ever to do thy best, and to excel all others"—*ἀλὲν ἀριστεύειν, καὶ ὑπερσχοῦ εἶμμεναι ἄλλων*. Moreover, whole communities were inspired by that same spirit. It is not uncommon for parishioners, in the later Middle Ages, to stipulate with the artist that he must contract to give them a work similar to that of some neighbour-

ing parish, "or better, if may be". Take, for instance, the contract for the rood-loft at Great St Mary's, Cambridge, in 1520. "John Nune of Drynkeston and Roger Bell of Ashfield in the countie of Suffolk, kerveres . . . covenante and graunte and also bynden them, ther heyres, and executors by these presents, that they shall make and cause to be made a new Roodde lofte. . . . And the briste [*breast, front*] of the sayde new Rodde Loft schal be after and accordyng to the briste of the Roddelofte within the parisshe Chirche of Tripplow [10 miles away] in all maner housyngs, fynyalls, gabeletts, formes, fygyres, and rankenesse of Werke, as good or better in every poynte. . . . The bakkesyde of the sayd Roddeloft to be also lyke to the bakkesyde of the Roodelofte of Gasseley or better."<sup>17</sup> Three more times again, in this contract, we have the repetition of that "as good or better". The author of *Dives and Pauper*, probably a friar, took the puritanical view that such rivalry brought base alloy into religion.<sup>18</sup> "I dread me that men do it more for pomp and pride of this world, to have a name and worship thereby in the country, or for envy that one town hath against another, not for devotion but for the worship and the name that they see them have by array and ornaments in Holy Church, or else by sly covetise of men of Holy Church. . . . For the people nowadays . . . be loth to come in Holy Church when they be bound to come thither, and full loth to hear God's service. Late they come, and soon they go away."



### 43. LITERARY LIFE

The conditions of medieval authorship were in one important particular far less radically different from modern conditions than were those of the artist's life. We have seen how those enormous buildings needed strict discipline and co-operation: how the task strained every nerve, and therefore there was something of the same emphasis upon realities as in warfare. Again, the privations were shared by all alike; even the master-mason was only a craftsman with the wages of a modern mechanic; and, lastly, we have seen that the fame was rather collective than individual. When we read in a chronicle that such and such an abbot "made" a magnificent missal or pulpit or altar-piece, that simply means that the abbot ordered and paid, and that the men who actually did the work received little or nothing beyond the common artisan's wages. The whole, therefore, was a great lesson in collectivism. It was William Morris's study of medieval architecture which helped to make a socialist of him.

In literature, on the other hand, there was as much individualism as the theories of Church and State permitted anywhere. It is true that there was then, as there is in every day, a certain tyranny of custom; the troubadours and the minnesänger followed certain conventions, many of which seem artificial to us. But this was only an exaggeration of what we see even in modern times. When the *Saturday Review*, for instance, was at its greatest, under that Venables who had broken Thackeray's nose in a fight at Charterhouse, it was a point of honour for all Saturday Reviewers so to imitate the editor's pungent style that many of their articles could not be distinguished by internal evidence from his. Again, we have seen how the universities and scholastic philosophy imposed a certain discipline. There we find collectivism, and a popularization of knowledge which involved vulgarization in both

senses. Thus, to a certain extent, medieval university learning was a people's learning, just as Gothic art was, in Morris's language, "the people's art". When we come, however, to the field of pure literature, we find far more individual freedom, and therefore more inequality of workmanship. In short, for good or for evil, medieval literature was comparatively free from that pressure of gild discipline which plays so great a part in the history of medieval art and craftsmanship. So far as the literature differed in spirit from our own, the medieval moulding forces were not trade union regulations, but the general circumstances of contemporary society.

The beginnings of European vernacular literature on any large scale are in the France of the twelfth century. This movement was roughly contemporaneous with the university movement, and, again, with the great development of sculpture by the cathedral artists. But of these three contemporaries literature was the oldest. These early beginnings, however, were mainly oral. The great period of written French poetry dates roughly from the marriage of Eleanor of Guienne to Henry II in 1152. The patronage of this queen and her sons brought together the two main elements, the troubadour from the south and the trouvère from the north of France. This great movement lasted for about 120 years. During all that time, aristocratic England was practically a colony of France. Moreover, Italy and Germany also were dominated by the French preponderance in the Crusades, especially the Third and Fourth, in which French courts were established at Cyprus and at Constantinople, quite apart from that of Charles of Anjou in Naples and Sicily. During this period the old Epic Cycles, *Charlemagne* and *Arthur*, and the Roman legends, were rewritten by French poets in what proved to be nearly their final form; and all this time Paris University was the great thinking-shop, the main European market of theological-philosophical ideas. Therefore, when Dante's master Brunetto Latini wrote the little encyclopaedia which he calls *Trésor* [1260], Italian as he was, he wrote it in the language of beyond the Alps, "because the French speech is more delectable and more common to all nations" than his own. Two

generations earlier than this, Pietro Bernardone of Assisi had insisted on calling the son born to him his "little Frenchman"—*Francesco*—and thenceforward that name, which is scarcely ever met with at any earlier date, became one of the commonest throughout Europe. St Francis himself showed greater love for French literature than for that of his own country; his intimate companions tell us how constantly he broke forth into French song and speech, and how consciously he modelled himself upon the heroes of French romance. Dante's style, again, was mainly due (next to his one great model Vergil, to whom he ascribes his *bel stilo*) to the troubadours. Petrarch owed them even a greater debt, and Chaucer's first period as a writer was almost entirely French. With this lead from France, and this infiltration of Vergil and the Latin classics through Italy, medieval poetry rose occasionally almost to the highest possibilities of technique. There are lines in Walther v. d. Vogelweide that are quite perfect. Take, again, Chaucer's epilogue to *Troilus and Criseyde*, beginning:

*O youngē freshē folkēs, he or she,*

*In which aye love upgroweth with your age.*

Those lines are technically as perfect as Spenser's.

In the Middle Ages, just as wealth was more evenly distributed, so was culture. The sum-total was less, and therefore enormous superiorities were less possible. It was not that men did not then strive to get as far ahead of their fellows in both fields as they strive at present, but that the circumstances rendered it impossible. The conditions in medieval England resembled those which obtained until quite recent times in Iceland, in the Faröe Islands, and even to some extent in Welsh-speaking Wales; nearly all that the cleric knew (apart from his Liturgy) was known also to the farmer. Hence the preponderance of the oral factor in the early literature of all countries. Goethe, after all, says rightly that writing is a misuse of speech: "Schreiben ist ein Missbrauch der Sprache." It does indeed preserve and spread it, but that which it preserves is "potted" speech. It is not often realized how generally, long after the rise of a vernacular

written literature, men were accustomed to read aloud even by themselves. In our own modern times a scholar like H. W. Fowler might plead with much truth that everything worth reading at all, beyond the most ephemeral "literature of information", deserves to be read aloud. Beyond this we must remember that the scarcity of parchment drove medieval writers to a multitude of abbreviations; so that we may doubt whether there were many men so well read and so learned, at any time of the Middle Ages, that they could read an unseen manuscript with anything like the rapidity to which a few professional palaeographers have attained nowadays by intense technical study. The ordinary bishop, indeed, was probably slightly more helpless in this respect than the ordinary university medievalist of to-day, just as the greatest philosopher of to-day may be more helpless in face of a modern written letter than an ordinary clerk. Reading, therefore, was to an enormous extent oral. St Philip heard the Eunuch reading aloud in his chariot as he went down from Jerusalem; and St. Augustine devoted a whole chapter of his autobiography to suggestions why his master, St Ambrose, might be found at his leisure moments reading silently to himself (*Confess.* Bk. vi, ch. 3). He was driven to this (thinks St Augustine) by the extreme pressure of other business, and the fear that bystanders might interrupt him to ask the explanation of any difficult passage. If reading had been a silent occupation for the Wife of Bath's clerkly husband, she would never have been provoked to tear those three leaves from his book, and "take him on the cheek" with her fist. Chaucer himself, it is true, after he had spent his working day at the Custom House over paper or parchment, would go home, and there, "as dumb as any stone", would pore over his own favourite books; but in him we have an exceptionally cultured man of this later period, dealing mostly with familiar texts and probably with expensive well-written copies. A hundred years ago it was necessary for S. R. Maitland to spend a good deal of ink in explaining to the public that the Middle Ages were not so utterly destitute of books as historians like Robertson had imagined. But Maitland's impulse drove the pendu-

lum too far the other way; and the modern tendency is certainly to minimize the booklessness of Chaucer's time. His model scholar of Oxford, who had spent on books and lectures his own patrimony and all that he could get from his friends, possessed only 20 volumes at his bed's head. Two centuries earlier, Bernard of Chartres, perhaps the greatest classical teacher north of the Alps during the Middle Ages, left all his own to the cathedral library: they numbered 24. The greatest law teacher of Bologna, Accursius, left a library of 63 volumes. We must remember that these were sometimes bulky, containing two or three good-sized volumes of modern print; yet, even so, this great man's collection, which sold for the sum of £500 of Bologna currency, would number less than 200 in all. Those few, it is true, were comparatively wide in their circulation. Anything recognized as a university textbook, or as a patristic classic, had incomparably greater chances of survival than even the most brilliant book which dealt with less trite subjects or was marked by a rarer individuality; and since, even when writing had reached its fullest medieval stage, poems were commonly written mainly for oral recitation, we may see how the servant in the hall would hear almost as much as his master, while they all gathered round the minstrel at the hearth. This, of course, would tend to maintain the general evenness of the level of culture. Although, from about 1150 onwards, the great epics were written down, yet to the very last the public were enormously dependent upon oral recitation.

So far we may say that this even level of culture was to the good; but on the other side we must remember its necessary restrictions. "A people's art" or "a people's literature" does to a certain extent discourage the highest flights of originality. Medieval literature, then, was restricted, in the first place, by what could be easily committed to memory. The minstrel could seldom afford to buy a book, and still less to carry many about; he must depend upon what he could remember. Secondly, it was restricted to that which could survive the hubbub of the hall; for we must remember that in the Middle Ages silence was not so strict a convention

among congregations as it is even during a performance in a modern drawing-room. Medieval preachers leave us in no doubt that they anticipated interjections and questions from their audience, and were prepared to answer them. This may explain to some extent the medieval convention of the Prologue, and what so often seems to us its unnecessary length. Such a Prologue, however unexciting in itself, had the advantage of advertising, for five or ten minutes at least, the facts that a recitation was beginning and that, if it was to be heard, the majority of listeners must hold their tongues. Again, it may to some extent explain the similarity of medieval scaffolding; the Month of May, the Dream, and so on. Listeners in those days, like children, loved repetition and reminders of famous things; and much that the modern reader finds so tedious is really analogous to the endless "says I" and "says he" of the conversations we hear in railway-carriages.

Chronologically we may make two main divisions of our subject, marking the break roughly at the year 1350. Again, we may roughly characterize them as the pre-Petrarch and the post-Petrarch eras. Before that date it may be said that nearly all writers were either capitalists or mendicants; but from Petrarch onwards we may date the beginning of the modern man of letters. At the earlier time we had, first, that phenomenon which meets us in every age—the royal or noble author. When Heine, in his *Buch Le Grand*, tells us how as a boy he used to gloat in the Museum of Düsseldorf over the wood-carvings of the Sovereign Elector Jan Wilhelm, he passes on to explain this ruler's artistic activity. Jan Wilhelm (he says) carved these trifles in his leisure hours, "whereof he had twenty-four per diem". This goes some little way to explain the activities of the royal and noble poets of the Middle Ages. There were men like the Emperor Frederick II and his son Manfred, of whose songs Dante speaks with respect; and, again, there was James I of Scotland with his "King's Quhair". The majority of the troubadours were men of more or less noble birth; but, in the earlier period, by far the most frequent writers were the higher clergy. We have only to run through the titles of any volume in Migne's

*Patrologia Latina*, which runs roughly down to A.D. 1200, in order to see that among this mass of theological, philosophical and historical writings there is scarcely one by a cleric of less rank than a dean or an archdeacon. The lower clergy, even when they had the education, had very little opportunity to make themselves heard by the reading public. Dividing the clergy, again, into Regulars and Seculars, we find that, although the Seculars in England produce a larger proportion of chronicles than in any other country, yet those of the Regulars, the cloistered clergy, form the great majority. In theory, it is true, the monk was confined within the precincts of his own abbey or priory; but in practice the cloisterer was seldom able to follow his ideal so strictly as to render himself a passive receptacle of the Holy Ghost. Monks found wide opportunities—in some cases almost unlimited—for hearing and transmitting news through the multitudes of pilgrims and travellers who spent a night or two in the monastery and passed on. Therefore the monastic chronicler at his best is a delicious gossip, with all the freshness of a child. He has a childlike closeness of observation, and very often just that piquant touch of innocent malice in his narration which renders the child's story of its elders so interesting. We have in England one of the greatest of these—Jocelin of Brakelond—whose story of Bury St Edmunds was seized upon by Carlyle for one of his most stirring sermons in *Past and Present*. On the Continent, the greatest in this style is the Franciscan Salimbene of Parma [1280]. Moreover, we sometimes find literary men retiring to a monastery for the leisure that it afforded. Henryson's poem of *The Abbey Walk* begins:

*Alone as I went up and down  
In an abbay was fair to see.*

Again, the fifteenth-century carol writer, John Audelay, writes from his lodging among the monks of Haughmond:

*As I lay sick in my languour  
In an Abbey here by west  
This book I made with great dolour  
When I might not sleep, nor have no rest.*

Chaucer himself crept into the precincts of Westminster

Abbey to die. His house, which he occupied for a few weeks, stood on part of the site of the present Henry VII's Chapel. His friend and contemporary, Gower, not only lived many years within the Priory of Southwark (the present church of St Saviour's by London Bridge), but actually married there, and was tended there by his wife in his blindness. Finally, we have seen how the author of *Piers Plowman* writes :

*If heaven be on this earth, and ease to any soul  
It is in cloister or in school.*

Yet, though the monastery or the university was an oasis of the literary man, his quiet was far from complete as compared with the most fortunate of modern students. As to the university, we have seen how commonly the streets were stained with students' blood. As to the monastery, one of our earliest intimate chronicles—that of St Gallen—describes how the envious Sindolf took his penknife and cut a fellow-monk's beautifully written book to pieces; and from Wessobrünn in Bavaria comes the complaint that, in the cloister itself, the monk's fingers might be too cold for writing in the winter months : *dum scripsit, friguit*.<sup>1</sup>

Authors among the secular clergy, it must be repeated, were nearly always men of high position : bishops, abbots, monastic officials or archdeacons at least. These, again, were often of noble birth, and courtiers to boot : men who, like Walter Map and Giraldus Cambrensis and Peter of Blois, had earned promotion partly at least by royal favour, and could not afford to let it go. Yet not only were these men subject to the slavery of court etiquette, but even Giraldus, sprung from the Kings of Wales, had a struggle to reach that public attention which he felt to be his due. The fact is that advertisement in the modern sense was impossible to the mediæval author. Nowadays the aspirant's first novel is heralded by a publisher's advertisement which announces that this is destined to be read when Dickens and Thackeray are forgotten; and these publishers' romances, more imaginative even than the authors', are sometimes rewarded by a proportionately preponderant share of the profits. In the Middle Ages a man had to blow his trumpet not vicariously but with his own



lips. Giraldus tells us how he "published" his *Topography of Ireland*, written in 1184. He read it at Oxford, "where the clergy of England chiefly flourished in clerkship". He consecrated one day to each of the three divisions of this great book. On the first he read aloud in his own hostel to all the poor scholars of the town; on the second to the Doctors of the different Faculties and pupils of greater note; on the third to the rest of the scholars, with many knights and citizens. For all these readings he supplied meat and drink on the most liberal scale; so that he is able to add, with pardonable pride, "it was a costly and a noble act", to which he knew no parallel in England for his own or any other age.<sup>2</sup> Not, of course, that the proceeding itself was unparalleled; but Giraldus knows of no one who has dared and afforded to practise it on such a scale. If the author was under heavy disadvantages here, he was under still heavier in the matter of livelihood. There was as yet no systematization of literature, and no very perfect organization even at the universities. Men taught here and there at grammar schools or cathedral schools, as best they could. Samson, Abbot of Bury St Edmunds, told Jocelin frankly that, if he could have made bread and cheese by teaching outside, he would never have become a monk. Therefore the man of letters, even after the rise of the universities, was often a hanger-on about the households of great folk. There came, however, a gradual evolution towards modern conditions. Even before the invention of printing, the great universities organized a book trade on something approaching modern lines, and created a whole class of copyists, translators and booksellers. Let us take the prologue to a book which has survived from Paris: "Here is the Code [of Justinian] in Romance [i.e. in French], and all the laws of the Code. Herneis the Romancer sells it; and anyone wishing to have such a book should come to him. His residence is in Paris, in front of Notre-Dame."<sup>3</sup>

Since, then, there was in our period not only no such copyright as we know nowadays, but even what we may call the antipodes of copyright, therefore the plagiarist was a public benefactor. No "public" in the modern sense was

possible as yet; even down to the end of the Middle Ages it must be mainly a public of private benefactors. He who has not a patrimony must get a patron. There was, it is true, as there has been in every day, the Grub Street author, both before 1350 and after; the jocolator, jongleur, half-minstrel, half-buffoon, who earned what he could from house to house, from market-place to market-place, from village green to village green. In this sort of life, even more than in our own day, most of these men lost self-respect. The clergy, to begin with, formally denied it to them. The religious encyclopaedia which was written by Honorius, commonly called of Autun, but probably of Augsburg, asks, "Can a minstrel [i.e. this half-singer, half-buffoon, the jocolator] be saved?" The answer is, there is no hope. "They are ministers of Satan; they laugh in this world; God shall laugh at them in the last day."<sup>4</sup> "He who gives money to a jocolator," writes another Churchman, "is feeing the Devil." This medieval condemnation of the comedian prevailed in France, on the official side, even down to the Revolution. The case of Molière is notorious.

Again, we must not forget the medieval contrasts. Though the minstrel, like the village dance, was generally condemned by the Church, yet in fact these tares did manage at all times to flourish amidst the orthodox wheat; and, as time goes on and monastic account-rolls become more frequent, we find how much of an abbey's revenues might be diverted from the actual poor to those wandering gleemen who enlivened the routine of its daily life.

The struggle out of Grub Street was immensely hindered by the public opinion which welcomed, rather than reprobated, literary piracy. The author of *Winnour and Wastour*, a contemporary of Chaucer who was evidently growing old when he wrote, complains bitterly of these beardless boys who learn his poems by rote and go about earning money and reputation by repeating them as their own. Doomsday (he feels) must be near; for the world is going fast downhill:  
*Whilom were lordēs in land, that loved in their hearts  
To hear makers of mirth that matters could find, . . .*

*But now a child upon chair, withouten chin-weeds,  
That never wrought through wit three words together,  
For he can jangle as a jay and japēs tell [jests made  
He shall be believèd and lovèd and let of a while [much of  
Well more than the man that made it himselven.*

Yet the lure of the *Vie de Bohême* was irresistible, then as at all times; and there were many who struggled on until they collapsed. Brunetto Latini writes: "What is the wandering minstrel's life? Laughter, and play, and vanity: he mocks at himself, at his wife, at his children, at everybody." But, if the jocolator laughed so wildly, this was often to avoid tears. The greatest perhaps of these wandering minstrels, a man who has attained to real literary fame, is the French jongleur, Rutebeuf. His poems are full of autobiographic touches. "By the Lord God in Heaven, when I married my wife I was a poor man indeed; and she was poorer still. I cannot work with my hands; no man shall ever know where my lodging is: I am too poor for that. . . . My bed is of straw—and anyone who has tried knows that a bed of straw is no bed. . . . I don't leave my door open; my house is too desert and poor and naked for that; oftentimes there is neither bread in my chest nor dough in my kneading-trough. Don't blame me if I'm not in a hurry to get back to my home! for I don't get a pleasant reception there unless I can bring back something with me. That's my bitterest burden in life; for I daren't go inside mine own doors when I am empty-handed. Now you know what my life is. What enjoyment do I get out of it?—nothing, but the vague hope of something better to-morrow!"<sup>5</sup> His only hopes are in the bright spots that come every now and then. He haunts a wedding-feast, and may eat in a corner with the dogs. He attends a funeral; and that brings him a little luck. The Count of Poitiers, having won heavily at the gaming-table, throws him a handful of coin; but he knows only too well the door where they cry "welcome" to you in the evening, and kick you out next morning. He forestalls the question, "Why, with all your talent, do you never write on love?" "Love", he says, "is only for the rich." It is in fact remarkable how few love-lyrics there are

of even tolerable literary merit among the Latin poems of the wandering scholars, the so-called Goliards, when we have discounted three or four of remarkable power.

After 1350, something like modern conditions began to come in. Patrons multiplied; yet until the invention of printing and even for some time afterwards there could be nothing like modern copyright. Now, the authors were often drawn from the clergy or the citizen class. Dante is too exceptional in every way to quote as a type; but Petrarch, Boccaccio, and the Villanis, with both authors of the *Roman de la Rose*, Chaucer and Froissart were all of citizen extraction. We may take Froissart as typical, because he has left abundant autobiographical material, which throws as much light on the sort of life that his contemporary Chaucer led, as we should have upon Shakespeare if Marlowe had left an autobiography. He was probably very slightly older than Chaucer, and outlived him by three or four years.<sup>6</sup> Like Chaucer, he was familiar with the courts of the great, as canon of the collegiate church of Chimay. We may imagine his death-bed like that in Browning:

*What is he buzzing in my ears? Now that I come to die,  
Do I view this world as a vale of tears? Ah, reverend sir,  
not I!*

His most definitely autobiographical work is the *Buisson de Jeunesse*. From that and from other sources we know that he was born at Valenciennes, and therefore a compatriot of our Queen Philippa. His childhood, he tells us, was fed on romances and dances. At school he beat and was beaten; and again, coming home torn and dirty, was punished for having fought. What interested him most in the classroom was not the lessons but the little girls who sat on the benches by his side; for elementary schools, at any rate, were often coeducational in the Middle Ages. He exchanged with them presents of apples and pears and glass rings, and confesses: "I thought more in those days of a chaplet of violets than nowadays of 20 marks from a count." This was all very well; but he began to wonder when he should fall seriously in love. Apparently he was not yet fourteen when the great event

came. It was in the month of May, of course, at the hour of prime, under the fresh rising sun. It was at what we might call a garden-party of the Middle Ages; she was sitting under a tree, reading the well-known romance of *Cléomades*. They read on together, and she finally asked him whether he could lend her any other romances. He possessed one—"The Bailiff of Love"—*Le Bailli d'Amour*—not a very romantic-sounding title. When he lent her this he slipped in a little ballade of his own, by way of recommendation. The book came back in due time with his ballade between the exact two pages into which he had slipped it. "Ha," said he, "here is a strange matter!" He was destined to see stranger matters before his own romance was ended. On another occasion he offered her a rose "par amour"; she answered: "The flower is in good hands. Leave it where it is." On a third, he suggested sitting out a dance: "All my delight in life is from you, if we had a little longer alone." She looked a moment at him and then said: "Let's go on dancing; I like dancing best." And so it lingered on. He never got further than to acquire her mirror by a bribe to her waiting maid; and in this he was able for months and years to contemplate his own woe-begotten countenance. She married, but that was not the end. The real quietus was given at another garden-party. "As she passed me she pulled my toupet" (the long ornamental front lock) with such purposeful violence that he understood it as a final and deliberate breach. But later on, at more than fifty, bald and disillusioned, he practically forestalls the last words of Mr Shaw's *You Never Can Tell*—"I'd do it again, sir, I'd do it again!"

We next find him at the court of his compatriot, Queen Philippa, acting the part of Boswell, picking up every possible anecdote of war and politics, and recording them in his *Chronicle*. On one occasion we see him riding with the Black Douglas, that very formidable soldier who had cut off the right hand of every English archer whom he could capture, in revenge for the ravage that they worked among his own soldiers. Froissart, on his own grey horse, and with a white greyhound, entertained him while they rode. At another

time we find him travelling with Earl Despensers, grandson of the great rebel who lost his head under Edward II. "Well forty times", says Froissart, "he would turn to me and say, 'Do you see that fair city? that was once ours, but it was taken from us by a wicked woman'", that is, by Gray's "She-Wolf of France". But Philippa died, and with her died Froissart's best hopes at the English court. We see him again dimly at his own Valenciennes in the position of a *couletier*, about which word scholars are still disputing whether it means a bank-clerk or a breeches-maker. In any case Froissart evidently felt himself under a cloud; for here is a great gap in his autobiographical details. Presently, however, he emerges again with a princely patron, and enjoys a succession of these for the rest of his life. At Lestinnes, the last fat living that was given to him, he confesses that he has spent fabulous sums in wine during the last ten years. His *Chronicles* were always in steady demand, as well they might be; for, untrustworthy as he is on minor details, he gives an unrivalled picture of his time. But, with all his pains, he gradually became conscious of a gap in these stories of war and adventure. Nearly all that he had told was of Northern and Central France, while the South had been almost as picturesque a theatre. At last, therefore, he made up his mind to visit the court of Gaston de Foix, at Orthez in the Pyrenees. On the way, at Pamiers, he fell in by good fortune with Sir Espaing de Lyon, a great actor himself in those military dramas. Over and over again, on the way, this knight was able to point out the scene of some noteworthy deed of arms: how the town of Artigat had been taken by a company of Gascons and English disguised as merchants, who drank first with the gate-keepers and then "slew them so privily that none knew thereof . . . and so took all the men of the town, sitting drinking or else in their beds"; how, again, the Bastard of Lourdes, with three companions dressed like monks, "for well they had the habit and countenance of monks", caught a rich merchant on the highway, who paid a ransom of 500 francs; and how, at last, this same Bastard of Lourdes at the head of five hundred, and Ernaulton Bisette at the head of

an equal company, veteran warriors on each side, met in clash upon a sudden foray and fought until both captains were slain, and each party was so weary that they ceased by agreement. "Behold, yonder is the [memorial] cross. . . . And with those words, we came to the cross; and there we said for their souls a *Pater Noster* and an *Ave Maria*."

At Orthez, again, Froissart found no lack of material. He had not even to search; for it was thrown upon him. Men would ask him, "Have you heard of this? or of that?" and then some new story would be recorded forthwith upon his tablets. He had brought thither his own romance of *Méliador*, a poem which, by one of the most wonderful coincidences and pieces of detective work in all literary history, has suddenly turned up again in our generation after apparent loss for all these centuries. This, then, he would read to his princely patron, as Gaston sat up during the watches of the night. For the great count's life had been clouded by a sad misadventure. In a fit of wrath, he had taken his young son by the throat with an open penknife in his hand, and had thus lost the only heir to his title. Thenceforward, he lived the life of an eccentric, turning night into day. Froissart, however, was well paid for his labour; the earl gave him "80 crowns, and my own book again". So, with this fresh prospect of another patron, and a rich collection of stories from the battlefield and from the realm of ghosts, he drifted off again towards the papal court at Avignon. We need follow him no farther; he died a few years afterwards in his comfortable house at Lestinnes, having left to posterity a priceless record of all one side of fourteenth-century society: the aristocratic side, and the lower classes from the aristocratic point of view. If Chaucer had written chronicles and left us an autobiography they would probably have been much the same.

There, then, we have the two extremes: Rutebeuf, the man of Grub Street, as against Froissart at his succession of princely courts. In between these we may put an English poet, who in his own turn has told us a good deal about himself—Thomas Hoccleve (1368-1446).<sup>7</sup> We find this man, at the age of nineteen, as clerk in the Office of the Privy

Seal. Twelve years later (1399) he is granted a pension of £10 until he shall obtain a benefice without cure of souls of double that value; we may roughly multiply these sums by 30 to get an idea of their significance in modern times. This was, of course, the ordinary way of rewarding civil servants of that day. Just as there were no university professorships in the modern sense, and the professor had to support himself as non-resident rector of some living, so again the king commonly rewarded all his servants, from the minister down to the scrivener, with an absentee rectory or something of the kind. When Hoccleve finally got a benefice, after about 25 years of waiting, it was in the form of a corrody at a monastery—that is, food, drink, lodging and dress for life. Long before those 25 years were up he had grown impatient of bachelorhood and cut off his main chance for a rich benefice by marrying and thus separating himself from all possibility of priesthood.

*I gasyd longē fyrste, and waytid faste  
After some benefice; and whan non cam,  
By proces I me weddid attē laste.  
And, God it wot, it sore me aghaste  
To byndē me where I was at my large;  
But done it was: I toke on me that charge.*

The literary value of his poems is not great; their main interest is autobiographical. They give us an early example of the civil servant who nourishes literary ambitions; and, again, pictures of bachelor or semi-bachelor life in Chaucer's London, separated by rural paths and miry roads from the royal palace and offices at Westminster. Hoccleve's confessions of personal weakness are not only frank, but even grovelling, as Rousseau is sometimes: we see in him something of the man who has so long been a hanger-on that he has lost self-respect. Brunetto's jocular "mocks at himself, at his wife, at his children, at everybody"; but Hoccleve stops short at this *everybody*: he confesses himself too cowardly to touch those who might strike back.

*My freendēs seiden vn-to me ful oftē,  
My misreulē me causē wolde a fit;*



*And redden me, in esy wyse and softē,  
 A lyte and lytē to withdrawen it;  
 But that nat mightē synke in-to my wit,  
 So was the lust y-rootid in myn hertē.  
 And now I am so rype vn-to my pit. . . .* [grave.  
*Excesse at borde bath leyd his knyff with me. . . .\**  
*The outward signe of Bachus and his lure,  
 That at his dorē hangith day by day  
 Excitith [us] to taaste of his moisture  
 So often that man can nat wel seyn nay.  
 For me, I seye I was enclyned ay  
 With-uten daunger thidir for to bye me,  
 But if swich charge vpon my bakē lay  
 That I moot it forbere as for a tymē. . . .†*

Upon which Hoccleve proceeds to moralize as unctuously as the repentant Falstaff. Tavern-haunting (he says) bears two inevitable fruits: it wastes his purse and tempts him to slander; "for in the cuppē seelden founden is that any wight his neighēburgh commendeth"; thus we harm ourselves, our friends, and God. Only one personal advantage he confesses here; his cowardice keeps him cautious of his tongue. For the rest, he is as wax in the hands of the tempter. His work is at Westminster, his tavern is in the city—probably in Eastcheap. In summer, "heat and unlust and superfluity" move him to take a boat,

*And in the wyntir, for the way was deep,  
 Unto the brigge I dressid me also,  
 And ther the bootmen took up-on me keep,  
 For they my riot kneewen fern ago:  
 With them was I y-tuggēd to and fro,  
 So wel was him that I with woldē fare;  
 For riot paieth largely everemo;  
 He styntith nevere til his purs be bare.*

\* It was usual to eat in couples, two to a dish. Each brought his own knife; forks were superfluous; spoons were carefully watched over by the steward.

† In Hoccleve, as in Chaucer, the so-called *e* mute is still a real syllable: compare Chaucer's rhyme of *Romē* with *Come hither, lovē, to me*.

He was perfectly conscious of this folly, but unable to resist. The boatmen caught him with flattery; for they never called him less than "master", and "so tikelid me that nycë reverence, that it me madë larger of despense". At night, again, potations were too free: "with repleet spirit wente I to my bed, and bathid there in superfluitee." No man was less willing than he to rise in the morning, unless it be his fellow-clerks Prentys and Arondel, for "often they their bed loven so wel, that of the day it draweth to bee prymë or they ryse up". He makes no pretence of love for his job. A scrivener cannot talk or sing at his work.

*Thise artificers, see I day be day,  
In the hotteste of all ther bysnyse,  
Talken and synge, and makë game and play  
And forth thir labour passith with gladnesse;  
But we labour in traveillous stilnesse;  
We stowpe and stare upon the shepës skyn,  
And keepë muste our song and wordës in.*

*What man that thre and twenti yere and more  
In wryting hath continued, as have I,  
I dar wel sayn it smerteth hym ful sore  
In every veyne and place of his body;  
And eyën most it greeveth trewely  
Of any crafte that man can ymagyne:  
Fadir, in feith, it spilt hath wel-ny myne.*

We may complement this with the far more comfortable picture of the schoolmaster Henryson at Dunfermline, describing how he came to begin his *Testament of Criseyde*, the best of all poems in the post-Chaucerian school. It was a cold day of early spring; colder still in those northern latitudes. There had been showers of hail; the sun was now set, and Venus rose as the evening star. Henryson watched her rising through the windows of his little oratory.

*Throughout the glass her beames burst so fair  
That I might see on every side me by.  
The northern wind had purified the air  
And shed the misty cloudës from the sky.*

*The frost freezēd, the blastēs bitterly  
From Pole Arctic came whistling loud and shrill,  
And caused me to remove against my will.*

*I mend the fire and warmēd me about:  
Then took a drink, my spirits to comfort  
And armēd me well for the cold thereout.  
To cut the winter night, and make it short,  
I took a book, and left all other sport,  
Written by worthy Chaucer glorious,  
Of fair Cresseid and worthy Troilus.*

#### 44. SPORTS AND THEATRE

Practically all our modern sports were known in a simple form in the Middle Ages. We can see this by running down the index of Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes of the English People*, where we pick out at once, for instance, the following titles: Archery, Blind-man's-buff, Bowling, Chess, Dice, Draughts, Fives, Football, Hammer-throwing, Hockey, Morris-dancing, Quarter-staff, Quoits, Shuttlecock, Skittles, Tennis, Wrestling. Men played, it is true, under what we should consider great disadvantages, such as the roughness of the ground and other obvious hindrances. But these, after all, were comparatively superficial. It was more serious that the organization of these games was extremely rudimentary, quite apart from rivalries between neighbouring villages in football, wrestling, archery, and so on; rivalries which, like those of present international athletics, were apt sometimes to produce as much friction as friendliness. There was for no game any written rule, nor was there any regular arrangement for umpiring. The romance of Fulk Fitzwarine tells how Prince John, the future king, losing his temper at chess, tried to brain the hero with the board, which was doubtless of solid oak with good square corners.<sup>1</sup> Scott, again, in his Preface to *Ivanhoe*, records how one of John Hampden's ancestors lost three manors for striking the Black Prince with his racket at tennis:

*Tring, Wing, and Ivingho*  
*Hampden must forgo*  
*For striking of a blow,*  
*And glad he could escape so.*

The Church, therefore, looked rather askance at these sports: we have seen how some college statutes explicitly forbade chess. To begin with, we must constantly remind ourselves how puritanical, in the modern sense, a great deal of Church doctrine was throughout the Middle Ages. Even in the

remotest corners of social life we find occasional influences of these theological ideas: e.g. the stress laid upon the fall of man; the idea of the body as evil in contrast with the divine soul; the low opinion of women, as we shall see more fully in a later chapter. University regulations, in so far as they took note at all of sport, did so almost always in a negative sense. Even so great a man and so free an intellect as Abailard was able to persuade himself that sickness of the body was good for mental progress. The great early Scholastics, such as Albert the Great and St Thomas Aquinas, give moderate approval to Aristotle's praise of bodily exercise as beneficial to man's development on the whole. Bishop Grosseteste, it is true, puts this more plainly; but Grosseteste was one of the very few great men of the Latin Middle Ages who knew something of Greek and had caught something of the Greek spirit at first hand.

It is better to approach a subject like this in the concrete than in the abstract; and a very good idea of the ordinary sports of a great town may be gathered from the description of London written by Fitzstephen, St Thomas Becket's chaplain. We may take it in the racy translation of the sixteenth-century antiquary, John Stow:

"Let us now come to the sports and pastimes, seeing it is fit that a Citie should not only be commodious and serious, but also merrie and sportful. . . . London, for the shews upon Theaters, and Comicall pastimes, hath holy playes—representations of myracles which holy Confessours have wrought, or representations of torments wherein the constancie of Martyrs appeared. Every year also at Shrovetuesday, (that we may begin with childrens sports, seeing we al have beene children,) the schoole boyes do bring Cokes of the game to their Master, and all the forenoone delight themselves in Cockfighting: after dinner all the youthes go into the fields to play at the bal. The schollers of every schoole have their ball, or [staff], in their hands: the auncient and wealthy men of the Citie come foorth on horsebacke to see the sport of the yong men, and to take part of the pleasure in beholding their agilitie. Every Fryday in Lent a fresh company of young

men comes into the field on horsebacke, and the best horsm[a]n conducteth the rest. Then march forth the citizens sons, and other yong men with disarmed launces and shields, and there they practise feates of warre. Many Courtiers likewise, when the king lieth nere, and attendants of noblemen doe repaire to these exercises; and, while the hope of victorie doth inflame their minds, do shew good prooffe how serviceable they would be in martiall affayres. In Easter holydayes they fight battailes on the water. A shield is hanged upon a pole, fixed in the midst of the stream; a boat is prepared without oares to bee caried by violence of the water, and in the fore part thereof standeth a young man readie to give charge upon the shield with his launce if so be hee breaketh his launce against the shield, and doth not fall, he is thought to have performed a worthy deed. If so be without breaking his launce he runneth strongly against the shield, downe he falleth into the water, for the boat is violently forced with the tide; but on each side of the shield ride two boates, furnished with yong men, which recover him that falleth as soone as they may. Upon the bridge, wharfes, and houses, by the rivers side stand great numbers to see, and laugh thereat. In the holy dayes all the Somer the youths are exercised in leaping, dancing, shooting, wrastling, casting the stone, and practising their shields: the Maidens trip in their Timbrels, and daunce as long as they can well see. In Winter, every holy day before dinner, the Boares prepared for brawne are set to fight, or else Buls and Beares are bayted.

“When the great fenne or Moore, which watreth the wals of the Citie on the Northside, is frozen, many yong men play upon the yce; some, striding as wide as they may, do slide swiftly: others make themselves seates of ice, as great as Milstones: one sits downe, many hand in hand doe draw him, and, one slipping on a sudden, all fall together: some tie bones to their feete, and under their heeles, and shoving themselves by a little picked staffe, doe slide as swiftly as a bird flieth in the ayre, or an arrow out of a Crossebow. Sometime two runne together with Poles, and, hitting one the other, eyther one or both doe fall, not without hurt: some

breake their armes, some their legges, but youth desirus of glorie in this sort exerciseth it selfe agaynst the time of warre. Many of the Citizens doe delight themselves in Hawkes, and houndes, for they have libertie of hunting in Middlesex, Hartfordshire, all Chiltron, and in Kent to the water of Cray."

We find sometimes definite matches arranged; as when, in 1222, "the citizens kept games of defence and wrestlings near unto the Hospital of St Giles in the Field, where they challenged and had the mastery of the men in the suburbs and other commoners"; again in 1453 we hear of a tumult made against the Prior of the Hospitallers "at the wrestling beside Clerkenwell". In 1253 again, when the Londoners had a great display of tilting at the quintain, the king's servants "came as it were in spite of the citizens to that game, and [gave] reproachful names to the Londoners. . . . The said Londoners, not able to bear so to be misused, fell upon the king's servants and beat them shrewdly; so that upon complaint to the king he fined the citizens to pay a thousand marks." It was on account of disorders of this kind at tournaments, and especially for the bloodshed they occasioned—since there was not only the chance of sudden death, "unhouseled and unaneled", in the field itself, but also of vendettas and treacherous murder afterwards—that popes repeatedly forbade tournaments altogether: a prohibition to which kings listened or not as they chose. Léon Gautier writes truly: "From [1143 to 1314], we find a long series of anathemas and papal thunderbolts. . . . Philippe-Auguste once made his children swear to take no part in any tourney. . . . But popes and kings were impotent here, and men laughed at their prohibitions."<sup>2</sup>

It is indeed from Coroners' Rolls and similar documents that we learn most in many ways about our medieval sports. With regard to football, for instance, we find a papal dispensation given in 1321 "to William de Spalding, canon of Sculdhham, of the order of Semp[r]ingham. During a game of ball [*ad pilam*], as he kicked the ball [*cum pede*], a lay friend of his, also called William, ran against him and

wounded himself on a sheathed knife carried by the canon, so severely that he died within six days. Dispensation is granted, as no blame is attached to William de Spalding, who, feeling deeply the death of his friend, and, fearing what might be said by his enemies, has applied to the Pope."<sup>3</sup> Similar mischances are frequently recorded at wrestlings. Over and over again we get from the Coroners' Rolls that story of the old ballad :

*They warstled up, they warstled down, till John fell on the ground;*

*A dirk fell out of Willie's pouch, and gave him a deadly wound.*

Poaching was naturally then, as always, the villager's most exciting sport; but hunting on any larger scale was far more dangerous for him then than now. Trained hawks were especially prized by the upper classes, and a whole statute of 1360 deals with the question of the lost or stray falcon. The bird must be carefully kept by whoever finds it; and if, within four months, the owner does not claim it, the sheriff may take it and give a reward to the finder. If on the other hand the finder "conceal it from the lord whose it was, or from his falconers, and thereof be attainted, he shall have imprisonment for two years and yield to the lord the price of the hawk if he have whereof; and if not he shall the longer be in prison." It is interesting, and all the more so in view of the Hunting Monk in Chaucer's Prologue, to read two items from the account-rolls of Nicholas de Litlington, Abbot of Westminster, with which we may compare Margaret Paston's offering of an image of wax of the weight of her sick husband to Our Lady of Walsingham :

"1368 *Item*, for a waxen image of a falcon bought to offer [at the altar] for a sick falcon, 6*d*.

"1368/9 *Item*, for a collar bought at the lord Abbot's bidding for his greyhound Sturdy, 3*d*."<sup>4</sup>

The contemporary *Ménagier de Paris*, that priceless book in which a Parisian citizen instructs his young wife in her



social and religious duties, and which represents the usages of good society in England also, writes, "At this stage of training your hawk, you must keep him on your fist more than ever before, taking him to law-courts and among folk assembled in church or elsewhere, and into the streets. Keep him thus as long as you can, by day or night; and sometimes perch him in the streets, that he may see and accustom himself to men, horses, carts, hounds, and all other things." When Sir Philip Neville's precious falcon was stolen, his friend the Bishop of Durham issued a general mandate to all archdeacons and clergy of his diocese to proclaim at Mass the sentence of excommunication against the offenders unless it were returned within ten days (1376). Two years later, the bishop, on his own account, issued an equally solemn excommunication against those "sons of iniquity, name unknown", who "to the grievous peril of their souls" "have abstracted stealthily and secretly from our forest of Weardale certain birds called Merlin-hawks in the vulgar tongue."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, no chapter on sport would be even approximately complete without a few words consecrated directly to the village poacher. He is a prominent person in the Durham manorial rolls; everywhere the court-records breathe suspicion of him and his dog. The Forest Laws condemned the latter, if caught, to lose one foot, thus spoiling him for life. Again, this poacher comes so prominently into one of the less known alliterative poems of Chaucer's age, *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, that a few lines may be quoted here in more modern form. The author writes how:

*In the moneth of May, when mirthēs be many,  
And the season of summer, when soft be the weathers,  
As I went to the wood, my weirdēs to dree,  
Into the shaws, myself a shot me to get  
At an hart or an hind, happen as it might,*

he waited on a bank at sunrise where "the grass was green, growen with flowers":

*The primrose, the periwinkle and penny-royal the rich;  
The dew upon daisies drenched full fine,  
Burgeons and blossoms and branches full sweet,*

*And the merry mists full mildly gan fall,  
The cuckoo, the cushat, keen were they both,—  
And each fowl in that frith fairer than other,  
That the dark was done and the day lightened.*

Here, after wearisome waiting, a herd of deer at last comes by. Our man crouches there in the bushes, scarce daring even to breathe. One great hart scents him, and pauses a moment to snuff the air and look around: "but gnattës greatly me grievëd, and gnawëd mine eyen." His fortitude had its reward: at one favourable moment he let fly, and "Dead as a door-nail down was he fallen." Hastily our poacher guts the body, and buries or hides the refuse:

*And heavëd all into an hole, and hid it with fern,  
With heath and with moss concealed it about,  
That no forester of the fee should find it thereafter;  
Hid the horns and the head in a hollow oak,  
That no hunter should get it nor have it in sight.*

A modern poacher's autobiography (for much of which I can vouch personally, being of the same Norfolk village) has revealed with frank simplicity that dualism of soul which can be found even in the most primitive minds: on the one hand wild adventure, breach of laws with positive pride and pleasure in rebellion, side by side with underlying respect for those laws, and for the folk who habitually keep them.<sup>6</sup> The medieval angler, again, was as modern as the medieval poacher. That fifteenth-century manual of sport which is commonly ascribed to the Lady Juliana Berners reminds us how, even though he return with an empty creel, he is not without good consolation; for "atte the leest he hath his holsom walke and mery at his ease, a swete ayre of the swete savoure of the meede[we] floures, that makyth hym hungry. . . . And yf the angler take fysshe, surely thenne is there noo man merier than he is in his spyryte."<sup>7</sup>

Archery, of course, was a favourite English sport. In 1337 Edward III, in view of his war with France, strictly forbade all other plays or pastimes on pain of death; a sanction which, like many others in the Middle Ages, must be taken with a liberal pinch of salt. But in 1477 we find the Commons

petitioning to the king that he should strictly enforce "the laws of this land", to the effect that "no person should use any unlawful plays [such] as dice, quoits, football and such like plays, but that every person mighty and able in body should use his bow, because that the defence of this land standeth much by archers". Latimer's sermon before Edward VI is worth repeating here. "In my time, my poore father was as diligent to teach me to shoote, as to learne me any other thing, and so I thinke other men did their children. He taught me how to draw, how to lay my body in my bowe, and not to draw with strength of armes as other nations doe, but with strength of the body. I had my bowes bought me, according to my age and strength: as I increased in them, so my bowes were made bigger and bigger: for men shall never shoote well, except they be brought up in it. It is a goodly Arte, a wholesome kind of exercise, and much commended in Phisicke. Marcilius Phicinus in hys booke *de triplici vita* (it is a great whyle since I read him now) but I remember he commendeth this kynde of exercise, and sayth, that it wrestleth agaynst many kindes of diseases. In the reverence of God let it be continued. Let a proclamation goe forth, charging the Justices of Peace, that they see such Actes and Statutes kept, as were made for this purpose."

From this we may now turn to the medieval stage, and first of all to the religious drama. It is true that here, as elsewhere, there is much difficulty in distinguishing clearly between the religious and the secular. In music, for instance, and poetry, there was continual interpenetration. I have already quoted what Friar Salimbene tells us of his friend Henry of Pisa, who caught up an air from a maidservant's love-song, and used it for his own hymn of "Christe Deus, Christe meus, Christe Rex et Domine".<sup>8</sup> Again, one of our oldest English lyrics, *Sumer is icumen in*, has come down to us by the fortunate chance that on the manuscript it has religious words set to the same musical notation. We may, however, distinguish roughly, and confine ourselves for the present to the miracle-play, mystery or pageant, terms between which there is no constant and definite distinction. The Roman Mass itself is

highly mimetic and dramatic in character. At the very beginning, when the priest says, "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be clean", there comes the symbolical aspersion with holy water. Then again there are constant dialogues; e.g. "Lift up your hearts"; "We lift them up unto the Lord". Again, the priest just before entering upon the Canon of the Mass, as he recites to himself "I will wash my hands in innocency", goes through a symbolical friction of hands. In the Canon itself, he spreads out his hands to bless the elements. At the Consecration of the Host he elevates the Host and Chalice for the adoration of the faithful; and then as he says "Remember, O Lord . . . us sinners" he strikes himself on the breast; and strikes again at "O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us"; and for the third time before communicating. Or take again the service for the consecration or reconsecration of a church. In many of our churches the consecration-crosses may still be seen here and there; at Exeter Cathedral and at the great collegiate church of St Mary Ottery very carefully carved or moulded in bronze; but ordinarily simply painted on the plaster of the wall inside. One, for instance, has survived within a few hundred yards of where I write now, on the north wall of Holy Trinity, Cambridge. Those crosses were anointed, each in its turn, with holy oil by the bishop as the last act of his consecration of the church. The ceremonial is most impressive. The bishop approaches from the churchyard, followed by all his clergy but one. That cleric is posted within the church "in ambush" (*quasi latens*). The bishop smites three blows upon the door with his staff; and then the anthem is struck up: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." Then comes from within the question, "Who is the King of Glory?" and the reply follows: "The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory." With those words the "ambushed" cleric opens the doors and slips out, *quasi fugiens*, as an expelled power of evil, to join the rest of the procession. From this liturgical drama was evolved later on a whole set of

miracle-plays, the so-called "Harrowing of Hell", which is faithfully reproduced in the last Passus but two of *Piers Plowman*.\*

Most important of all, however, was the Easter ceremonial. That may be traced definitely, in germ, as far back as the ninth century. It forms, again, one of the most striking episodes in the so-called *Revelation to the Monk of Evesham* (really, *Eynsham*). According to this ceremonial, in memory of Christ's burial, the great cross of the church was taken down and hidden all Friday and Saturday behind the altar. Then, before Matins on Easter Day, came an anthem in dialogue form, paraphrased from the Gospels; the so-called *Quem Quaeritis?* The angel sings: "Whom seek ye in the tomb, O servants of Christ?" to which the Maries reply: "We seek Christ that was crucified, O Host of Heaven." *Angels*: "He is not here; He is risen as He foretold; go, bear tidings that He is risen from the tomb." And then all in chorus: "I am Risen." Gradually this ceremony was much elaborated; and we find in some churches the so-called Easter Sepulchre in connection with it. This was a carved shrine of wood or stone, or even in some cases of metal—iron or silver—and, here and there, an actual small chapel within the church, as may still be seen at Luton in Bedfordshire. This Easter Sepulchre, then, was hung, with a canopy, and the Host in its pyx was generally laid there with the Cross. Watchers, in the guise of Pilate's soldiers, lay all night by it singing psalms, and sometimes even, to keep up the symbolism, in actual or sham armour. Here, as in so many other instances in history, the fullest description we get is not from contemporaries, who were too familiar with the scene to take the

\* I cannot resist here repeating the story of the Devonshire parish clerk, which was such a favourite with our Devon-born historian, J. A. Froude. This was in the days when the ordinary parish church had no organ, but a fiddle, with perhaps a bass and a few other instruments in the gallery. One Sunday, when this anthem was announced, the parish clerk, who also played the bass fiddle, said audibly across to his neighbour, "Give us the rosin, Jim, and us'll soon show 'em who be the King of Glory!"

trouble of describing it, but from one who was impressed by it when it was already passing away. At Louvain, in 1569, "they make the grave in a high place in the church, where men must go up many steps, which are decked with black cloth from above to beneath, and upon every step stands a silver candlestick, with a wax candle burning in it; and there do walk soldiers in harness, as bright as Saint George, which keep the grave, till the priests come and take him up; and then comes suddenly a flash of fire, wherewith they are all afraid and fall down; and then up starts the man, and they begin to sing *Alleluia*, on all hands, and the clock strikes eleven." Sometimes the ceremony was even more elaborate than this, as may be read in Sir E. K. Chambers's *Medieval Stage* (I, 32), which is the classical book on this subject, and to which everyone who approaches it must now be indebted.

The "Crèche" again, though it may have been sometimes used earlier, owed its immense popularity to St Francis, of whom his biographers tell us that he enacted the scene in an actual stable, with living animals, as part of his constant imitation of the life of Christ. Again, there was often a far more elaborate Epiphany Liturgy (Twelfth-Night) with all the three Kings from the East, which in some versions was so long that it ran to six separate scenes. At the Cathedral of Laon, even the Massacre of the Innocents was symbolically and liturgically performed in the church. At St Paul's in London on Whit Sunday, during the hymn *Veni Creator*, a dove was let down through a hole in the vault, with burning tow, to represent the tongues of fire alighting upon the Apostles. Thus we may say that, by the time we come to the thirteenth century, these and other liturgical dramas were as far advanced as they could be within strictly religious limits. Up to this point we may treat them as "services", *officia*; in their further development they have become "amusements"—*spectacula*.

The earliest, perhaps, of these "Miracles" was that St Nicholas play which may be traced at least as early as the eleventh century, and has recently been excellently analysed

by Professor G. R. Coffman.\* With great probability he connects the rise of this, primarily, with those new impulses in popular literature, as everywhere else, which we may trace roughly from the fateful year 1000. Secondly, he emphasizes the multiplication of Saints' Lives which naturally accompanied this growth. Thirdly, he urges the probability that those writers, who were lashing their flanks to describe their saintly hero in the most picturesque and striking terms, caught at every possibility of rendering their story semi-dramatic; and, finally, the decisive impulse seems to have come from the cult of St Nicholas, very ancient in his own city of Myra in Asia Minor, and again at Bari in Southern Italy, but a fresh importation into Western Europe during these later eleventh-century days. The story probably came through those ubiquitous Norman pilgrims who returned to their homes after visiting sacred places in Rome, in Southern Italy, or beyond the seas. Its spread can be traced especially on the trade route in the Loire valley and in Normandy, and from the Loire valley we have a very illuminating anecdote somewhere about 1080; at the Priory of La Croix, subject to La Charité, which in turn was subject to Cluny. Some monks asked leave to sing on St Nicholas's day "a new and popular history of that saint's life", but were denied by the prior because it was not the traditional Cluniac ecclesiastical chant (as he put it), but the playful (*jocularia*) composition of secular clerks. Twice the prior refused them; on the third time he had them beaten with a brush of twigs (*cum scopa*). Therefore St Nicholas appeared to the prior at night and forced him to sing an antiphon in honour of himself (St Nicholas). The prior was long unwilling, but the saint steadily smote him "after the accustomed fashion of a master to a boy who will not learn his letters". The prior, still reluctant and with tears, sang to the end, St Nicholas

\* Professor Coffman seems right in distinguishing, at the earliest stage between "miracle" and "mystery". He produces evidence for the theory that the term miracle was generally confined to plays from saints' lives, and mystery to biblical plays. In the later fourteenth century, however, the names had certainly become to some extent interchangeable.

laying on every now and then, with the words: "This is what you did to your monks!" The monks themselves were awakened at this noise and flocked in with lights; "and, seeing him rubbing his back lustily and singing this anthem at the same time, they were amazed beyond measure." He greeted them with a "God forgive you, brethren, for making St Nicholas beat me like this!" But the lesson was effectual. He adopted the fashion; and so did the mother house of La Charité, not only for itself but also for all its dependent cells.

The actors in these plays were at first mostly, if not always, schoolboys or young clerics. St Nicholas was the patron saint of such folk, owing to the fact that, by a strange misunderstanding of the symbolism in paintings and carvings of his miracles, he was celebrated in later legend as having raised from the dead three young scholars who had put up at an inn, had been murdered by the landlord and his wife, and salted down and furnished in the guise of pickled pork to travellers. At Cambridge, for instance, King's College has as its official title The College of St Mary and St Nicholas. The belief that the plays were mainly acted by monks is a time-honoured superstition. The theory is built upon a single instance in England about A.D. 1100; yet it is flatly contradicted by the actual text of the chronicle, which shows clearly that the schoolmaster who played this "miracle" with his boys was not a monk at that time; he took the vows only later, in a fit of penitence for mischief which he had inadvertently caused. Again, the idea that friars played a principal part in the composition or the performance of miracle-plays is due to a misunderstanding perhaps even grosser. It is founded on the doings of a certain Friar Melton at York, who is recorded as *professor sacrae paginae*. This title is interpreted (even, it must be confessed, in such a standard work as *The Cambridge History of English Literature*) as "professor of sacred pageantry", whereas of course it was only the common medieval synonym for "Doctor of Divinity". Moreover, the action of this particular Friar Melton at York was not in foundation of any miracle-play, but in regu-



lation and restriction of those which already existed. On the other hand these plays, though not in any sense predominantly monastic, had naturally a clerical origin, in those days when every scholar was a cleric of some sort. We have seen how Fitzstephen, as early as 1170, speaks of the theatrical performances of these young clerks at Skinner's Well and Clerkenwell, just outside the walls of London. In the thirteenth century we find episcopal prohibition of miracle-plays in churches or churchyards; yet this was frequently broken; and the *Book of Miracles* of St John at Beverley shows incidentally that one was regularly played at the end of the century in the churchyard there.<sup>9</sup>

The significance of Corpus Christi Day must not be missed here, since nothing else can show more plainly the extent to which not only medieval art, but medieval religion also, however taken in hand by the hierarchy at its later stages, grew up essentially from below. The dogma of Transubstantiation was first officially proclaimed by Innocent III in 1215, and this naturally had very great effect not only on the stories of miracles (especially in adding frequency to the much older story of onlookers to whom an actual child appears in the priest's hands immediately after the consecration of the holy wafer) but also on popular devotions of all kinds. About ten years after this decree, a visionary girl in Belgium felt that the Church ought to institute a solemn feast in honour of the dogma. She inspired a young priest with equal enthusiasm; and he composed a church service for the day.<sup>10</sup> That service spread among the common people, and was accepted by the Bishop of Liège in 1246. The struggle was lively, and sometimes even violent, between these innovators and the more conservative clergy in the diocese of Liège; but, after much debate and quarrel, the feast was accepted also by Pope Urban IV (1264) who, however, died before formally promulgating his decree. The final official seal was set to it at the Council of Vienne in 1311. This celebration was always marked by a great procession, with the Host borne at its head; and rich Indulgences were decreed from Rome for those who followed the church services on that day. From thence it was a natural

step in a great town like York that each trade gild, with its own separate banner, should form a separate limb of the procession. These banners represented some emblem or some group of figures; and, by a further evolution, they were sometimes so arranged as to form a consecutive picture of Bible history or some part of it. Thence it was a natural step that each of these bodies should have its own play, and thus we get the town cycles. The first recorded of this kind in England is the Chester cycle of 1328, which was indeed written by a monk, Higden. Those original plays, however, have been lost; and the surviving Chester cycle, though it may have been founded upon them, is very much later. Before 1400 there were such cycles at York, Beverley, Coventry, London and Cambridge. Before the Reformation these had spread so far that even little towns and large villages had their own mystery-play. Apparently the movement had decayed to some extent even before the Reformation; and certainly its decadence was then hastened not only by the change of religion, but sometimes by very regrettable violence on the Reformers' part. It was revived under Mary; but under Elizabeth we find only a few rare survivals. Yet, here again, it is from that later time that we find the fullest account of the ancient institution. By this time, in addition to the former names of "miracle" or "mystery", we must add that of "pageant"—that is, a wooden stage (Latin, *pagina*) which was generally, but not always, set on wheels for locomotion. Each gild or group at a great city was responsible for one separate pageant, including not only the scenery, properties and so on, which were kept from year to year, but also competent actors. There was indeed liberal prompting; but at Beverley, at any rate, we find documentary record of a gild which is fined for the incompetence of its actors. For these, then, we may take the description of Archdeacon Rogers at Chester in 1594. "Every company had his pageant, or part, which pageants were a high scaffold with two rooms, a higher and a lower, upon four wheels. In the lower they apparelled themselves; and in the higher room they played, being all open on the top, that all beholders might hear and

see them. The places where they played them was in every street. They began first at the Abbey gates, and when the first pageant was played it was wheeled to the high cross before the mayor, and so to every street; and so every street had a pageant playing before them at one time, till all the pageants for the day appointed were played: and when one pageant was near ended, word was brought from street to street, that so they might come in place thereof exceeding orderly, and all the streets have their pageants upon them all at one time playing together; to see which plays was great resort, and also scaffolds and stages made in the streets in those places where they determined to play their pageants." At York, the citizens before whose house the pageants stood were compelled to pay for the honour; or possibly for the pecuniary profit of this arrangement.

So much for the origin of these religious dramas. Let us now take two specimens of the plays themselves; definitely above the average; one of tragedy and one of comedy. The first is from the sacrifice of Isaac in the Chester cycle:

*Father, we must no more meet  
By aught that I may see;  
But do with me then as you will,  
I must obey, and that is skill,  
God's commandment to fulfil  
For need's so must it be.  
Upon the purpose that you have set you,  
For sooth, father, I will not let you,  
But ever more to you bow,  
While that ever I may—  
Father, greet well my brethren yinge      [young  
And pray my Mother for her blessing,  
I come no more under her wing,  
Fare well for ever and aye;  
But Father! I cry you mercy,  
For all that ever I have trespassed to thee,  
Forgiven, Father, that it may be  
Until Doomëday.*

For comedy, on the other hand, perhaps the highest level is

in the Shepherd's Play at Wakefield; but this is too long to quote. For the present purpose we can only find room for the scene of Noah and his wife from the Chester Deluge Play. This is a specially English scene: it occurs, I believe, in no other country, and it will be remembered how Chaucer alludes to it: as the

*sorrow of Noah and all his fellowship  
That he had, ere he got his wife to ship.*

From this, and from his allusion to Absalom, we may see that what impressed Chaucer most was the comic side of the miracle-play, as Langland was most impressed by the tragic.

N. *Wife, in this castle we shall be kept  
I would thy children and thou in leapt.*

N.W. *I faith Noah, I had as lief thou slept,  
For all thy frankish fare,  
For I will not do after thy rede.*

N. *Good wife, do as thou art bid.*

N.W. *By Christ, no! ere I see more need,  
Though thou stand all day and rave.*

N. *Lord, how crabbēd are women alway!  
They never are meek, that dare I say  
And that is well seen by me today  
In witness of you each one.  
Good wife, let be all this trouble and stir  
That thou makest in this place here,  
For all men think thou art my master  
(And so thou art, by St John!)*

[At this point God commands Noah to put the animals into the Ark, and his sons count them in two by two, as in the nursery rhyme.]

N. *Wife come in, why standest thou there?  
Thou art ever froward, that dare I swear;  
Come for God's sake, time it were,  
For fear lest that we drown.*

N.W. *Yea, sir, set up your sail,  
And now forth with evil beal,  
For, without any fail,  
I will not out of this town!*

*But if I have my gossips each one,  
One foot further I will not go on  
They shall not drown, by St John,  
If I may save their life.*

*They loved me full well, by Christ!  
If thou wilt not have them in thy chest  
Why then row forth, Noah, whither thou list,  
And get thee a new wife!*

**N.** *Shem, son, thy mother is wrawe  
Forsooth, such another I do not know,*

**Shem.** *Father, I shall set her in, I trow  
Withouten any fail.  
Mother, my father doth thee send  
And bids thee into yonder ship wend:  
Look up and see the wind,  
For we be ready to sail.*

**N.W.** *Son, go to him and say  
I will not come therein today!*

**N.** *Come in, wife, in twenty devils' way  
Or else stand without!*

**H.** *Shall we all fetch her in?*

**N.** *Yea, sons, with Christ's blessing and mine,  
I would you hasten you betime,  
For of this flood I am in doubt.*

### Gossips' song

*The flood comes fleeting in full fast,  
On every side it spreadeth full far,  
For fear of drowning I am aghast;  
Good gossips, let us draw near,  
And let us drink, ere we depart,  
For oftentimes we have done so;  
For at a time thou drinks a quart,  
And so will I, ere that I go.  
Here is a bottle full of Malmsey, good and strong,  
It will rejoice both heart and tongue;*

*Though Noah think us never so long  
Here will we drink alike!*

*Japhet. Mother, we pray you all together  
For we are here, your own childer,  
Come into the ship for fear of the weather,  
For His love that you bought.*

*N.W. That will not I, for all your call,  
But I have my gossips all.*

*S. In faith, mother, yet you shall,  
Whether you will or not,  
[They hustle Noah's wife in.]*

*N. Welcome, wife, into this boat!*

*N.W. And have thou that for thy not! [nut, head  
Aha! Mary, this is hot!*

This brings us to another point. What is the fountain-head of this comic element in the miracle-play? Why, for instance, is that Wakefield *Shepherd's Play* a farce almost from beginning to end? We may answer, I think, that this is not only almost inevitable in human nature, but it had its definite precedent in what we may call the liturgical farces of the Feast of Fools, the Boy Bishop, and so on. The Church was compelled to tolerate a large number of heathen customs, only doing her best to baptize them to her own purposes. These heathen customs had, as we shall see, mainly gathered round the different turning-points of the year, and had been designed to propitiate the gods and secure fertility for the fields. The Winter Feast, especially, was prehistoric; and in ancient Rome it took the form of the Saturnalia, beginning on December 17th. The essence of that feast was that the relation between master and man, owner and slave, should for a moment be turned topsy-turvy. That, again, was the essence of the liturgical farces which went by the name of *Deposuit*. In the middle of the service, at that point of the Magnificat when we come to the words *deposuit potentes*—"He hath put down the mighty from their seat"—then the precentor of a great church would transfer his official staff to the Lord of the

Feast (the *dominus festi*), who had been chosen beforehand from among the subdeacons. Then followed a riot all the more boisterous because the lower clergy, of whom this subdeacon was the representative, were habitually ill-paid and over-worked, and beneath them was the still lower class of choirboys, often beaten and bullied all the year round. We may say, therefore, that this ceremony of *Deposuit* was the revolt of the clerk and the choirboy; and it thoroughly earned its other name of "Feast of Fools". Similar to this was the "Abbot of Misrule", celebrated by Scott in his novel of *The Abbot*; and again the "Boy Bishop": a boy elected as bishop for a moment by his fellows, and at some great churches furnished with a set of costly robes and ornaments. The Feast of Fools was formally forbidden by the Ecumenical Council of Basel in 1445; and the Pragmatic Sanction between the Pope and the king practically made those prohibitory decrees part of French civil law. The character which the feast had assumed may be judged by the formal letter from the University of Paris to the King of France:

"Priests and clerks may be seen wearing masks and monstrous visages at the hours of office. They dance in the choir dressed as women, or disreputable men, or minstrels. They sing wanton songs. They eat black-puddings at the altar itself, while the celebrant is saying Mass. They play at dice on the altar. They cense with stinking smoke from the soles of old shoes. They run and leap throughout the church, without a blush at their own shame. Finally they drive about the town and its theatres in shabby carriages and carts; and rouse the laughter of their fellows and the bystanders in infamous performances, with indecent gestures and with scurrilous and unchaste words."

Here, then, was a liturgical play of immemorial ancestry, from which the miracles drew much of their rough humour. Moreover, the miracle-plays themselves were not absolutely free from this reproach of an irreverence deeper than the mere admission of comic scenes. Yet these, it must be repeated, had grown up naturally, perhaps almost inevitably, from the compromise which Gregory the Great had wisely

recommended to his missionaries in England. "Do not, after all," wrote Gregory, "pull down the temples. Destroy the idols; purify the buildings with holy water, set relics there; and let them become temples of the true God. Thus the people will have no need to change their places of concourse; and where of old they were wont to sacrifice cattle to demons, thither let them continue to resort on the day of the saint to whom the church is dedicated, and slay their beasts no longer as a sacrifice, but for a social meal in honour of Him whom they now worship."

Just as these heathens' feasts became the medieval "Church Ale", so did their other religious ceremonies often survive as popular sports. We find these ceremonies vaguely touched upon by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History*. They had originally been grouped mainly round the three culminating points of agricultural life, in those ages, when the most civilized life was almost entirely agricultural. At a still earlier stage the main foci had been two, i.e. the beginning and the end of winter: in mid-November, when the first serious snows fall, and again in spring when the first violets show their face and the first swallows arrive. These account for the peculiar sacredness of Martinmas (November 11th) all through the Middle Ages, and again for the fact that the Resurrection Feast coincided with the pagan *Eostre*, and borrowed its name. The feasts gathered themselves more definitely round the first ploughing ("Plough Monday" was the first Monday after Twelfth Day), the first sowing, and the harvest. The author of *Dives and Pauper* condemns, among other popular superstitions, that of "ledying of the plough aboute the fire as for gode begynnyng of the yere, that they schudde fare the better alle the yere followyng".<sup>11</sup>

These heathen festivals were often concerned, as is common in the primitive mentality, with some compulsion exercised upon the god. The dipping of some image or symbol in water was often part of it; and this, again, was perpetuated in the medieval custom, by no means extinct to the present day, of plunging the saint's statue into a neighbouring river in order to compel rain in times of drought. At Villeneuve-St-George,



for instance, one of the first villages on the Seine that we pass on our journey southwards, where the church was appropriated to the monks of St-Germain-des-Prés, the thirteenth-century villagers were accustomed to exercise this spell of a water-bath over their negligent or recalcitrant patron saint.<sup>12</sup> One of the most interesting medieval sports of the kind took place at Hocktide; that is, the Monday and Tuesday following the second Sunday after Easter. Those days so conspicuous in popular memory that they are often used in formal legal documents. On Hock-Monday the women "hocked" the men; they went about the streets and roads with ropes, with which they caught and bound any man they came across, and demanded a forfeit for his release. On Hock-Tuesday the men retaliated upon the women. We find the Bishop of Worcester forbidding this practice in 1450; but in spite of such disfavour in higher quarters it was a regular source of parochial revenue, and we constantly find recorded in church-wardens' accounts the sums collected on Hockdays.

Even more popular and long-lived was the dance round the Maypole, which was a definite survival of the pagan spring festivals; and upon which, again, the clergy often frowned. Bishop Grosseteste, for instance, specifically forbade it for his whole great diocese in the early thirteenth century. This May Dance gradually crystallized into a king-and-queen play, to which were added in later days the characters of Robin Hood and Maid Marion; moreover it was frequently associated with the Morris Dance. This May-day play was so complicated that it was often composed and carried out by professional minstrels. The Sword Dance, again, is probably a survival of the ancient superstition, so brilliantly expounded by Sir James Frazer, of the Martyr-King; of the idea that, in order to ensure prosperity, a human sacrifice must be made, and the greater the personage the more efficacious the sacrifice. This, again, is bound up with the equally frequent prehistoric idea of enacting the death and resurrection of summer. That kind of ceremonial would also appeal to all martial instincts; and it is natural that we should find it noticed by Tacitus in his description of the ancient Germans. In proportion as this

Sword Dance was elaborated, comic accompaniments were also brought in; so that at this point what we may call the pagan liturgy goes through the same natural evolution as we have seen in the Christian liturgy. The Morris Dance itself became more and more elaborate, often with the accompaniment of a hobby-horse and a clown and a comic woman, Bet or Marion.

The Plough Monday plays, with their infinite variations, nearly always follow a certain type which may be divided into three acts. There is first the presentation, a prologue, as for instance in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Then comes the drama itself, ending in a fight, a death and the doctor called in, who restores the dead to life; this we see in our puppet-play of Punch and Judy. Then comes the collection; either one of the characters goes round begging for money, or this is done by an appointed official. These dramas gradually shaded off into the more elaborate form of the St George play, the popularity of which may be gauged by a significant passage in the *Paston Letters* (1473). Here Sir John complains of "W. Woode, whyche promysed . . . he wold never goo ffro me; and ther uppon I have keypyd hmy thys iij yer to pleye Seynt Jorge and Robyn Hod and the Shryff off Not-tyngnam; and now, when I wolde have good horse, he is goon into Bernysdale, and I withowt a keeper". The great Earl of Northumberland also made regular provision for "liveries for Robin Hood" in his household.

It is evident that, by this time, the popularity of these sports was leading to the creation, side by side with the professional minstrel, of a class of semi-professional players. All popular sports had a growing tendency to crystallize round Christmas. When Christianity first began to claim the allegiance of the Roman world, the rulers of the Church were confronted by a series of immemorial winter-feasts which together made the latter half of December and the beginning of January into one continuous carnival. The exact origin of December 25th as the traditional date of the birth of Christ is wrapped in obscurity. The most we can say is that, by A.D. 336 at least, that feast fell between December 8th and December 27th. Its final definite fixture for the 25th was

probably due to an attempt to harmonize it with the pre-Christian Roman calendar. From Rome it gradually spread over East and West, not reaching Jerusalem until after A.D. 500, and never adopted at all by the distant Church of Armenia. It was established at Antioch about A.D. 375 and at Alexandria about 430. But, before this feast had been fixed to an exact day, it had naturally attracted to itself a great deal of pre-Christian merry-making. The early Fathers protested against these Christmas sports, as they did against nearly all other pagan enjoyments; but it ended at Rome, as it ended later on at Canterbury, with their acceptance and the transference of prohibition into attempts at regulation. In Bede we find Christmas, Epiphany (Twelfth Night) and Easter as integral feasts in English Christianity. Therefore it was specially about Christmastide that what we may call the liturgical farces gathered; and that of the Boy Bishop, which was the least extravagant, was not only definitely fixed at many cathedrals, but also regularly patronized by monasteries.

Meanwhile the layfolk were inventing for themselves other similar dramatic representations, which were naturally still more frowned upon by the Church authorities. We have interesting testimony to this in two documents from the Register of Bishop Grandisson of Exeter. The first describes how "a certain sect of malignant men", calling themselves the Order of Brothelyngham, dressed as monks and chose "a certain lunatic and mad fellow" as their abbot; and how, having set him up in the "theatre", they go round about the streets and squares of the city with great noise of horns, capturing layfolk and clergy and extorting "certain sums of money in place of sacrifice, nay, rather of sacrilege" (1348). The term *Brothelyngham* is doubtless a parody on the actual monastic order of Sempringham, which was often called Simplingham; *brothel*, again, was a common name for any foul fellow. In the other case (1352) the bishop finds himself compelled to fulminate against a play composed "in contumely and approbrium" of the leather-dressers (*allutarii*) of Exeter; a play which, as he says, is only too likely to lead to breaches of the peace at the Devil's instigation. He there-

fore forbids the performance on pain of excommunication; but at the same time he admonishes these leather-dressers that they have brought it upon themselves "by selling their goods at more than the just price in these modern times" (*modernis temporibus*), in which the King and the Council have fixed prices; in other words, they have contravened the Statute of Labourers.<sup>18</sup> We must not, however, jump from the fact that the bishop mentions *theatrum* at Exeter to the conclusion, which is sometimes drawn, that the city already possessed a theatre in the modern sense. *Theatrum* in medieval Latin need mean no more than its original sense of "a gazing place" of any kind. It may be found, for instance, applied to the village green; and the Exeter *theatrum* may perfectly well have been any of the open spaces. However, there is no doubt that by this time the drama was growing in England; and already in the fourteenth century we find "moralities" (a sort of mystery-play in which the motive is moral rather than definitely religious) and, again, a great multitude of lay pageants. London naturally set the lead here. Stow, telling us that he will enumerate a few of them, begins with that with which the citizens greeted Edward I on his return from the victory over Wallace at Falkirk in 1298. Others, equally magnificent, greeted Henry V after Azincourt in 1415, and again in 1421 when he brought his French bride home. Other towns tried to follow the same example in their own fashion, e.g. Coventry, Worcester and York.

Then grew up something much more like the modern drama, the so-called Interlude. Sir E. K. Chambers is probably right in explaining this word not as a play in the interval between two other plays, or between two courses at a banquet, "but *ludus* carried on between (*inter*) two or more performers"; in short, a *ludus* in dialogue. This, as he points out, might apply to any kind of dramatic performance whatever; and as a matter of fact we find it applied at early dates to miracle-plays, but thence gradually restricting itself to something different. Thus, "while Interlude was only the subordinate name for plays of the Miracle-type, it was the normal name, varied chiefly by *Play* and *Disguising*, for plays given

in the banqueting halls of the great". From the early fifteenth century onward we find travelling troupes of Interlude players; these may be the *lusores* who are so frequently mentioned in account-rolls as having been entertained and paid in monasteries. This growth naturally kindled gradual rivalry with the pre-existing professional minstrels. Thus the latter petitioned for and received the grant of a Royal Minstrels' Guild in 1469. The players, like the minstrels, "put themselves under the protection of nobles and persons of honour". The earliest upon record are those of Henry Bourchier, Earl of Essex, and those of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, afterwards Richard III. Henry VII had four "King's Players, alias, in the vulgar tongue, *les pleyars of the Kyngs enterluds*", each receiving five marks a year, with a special bonus when he played before the king. At vacation times they toured the provinces. Once they accompanied the Princess Margaret to her wedding with James IV of Scotland. Henry VIII increased their number to eight. These new conditions naturally reacted upon the plays. The performance now must be brief and pithy; Interludes seldom run beyond a thousand lines. "Again, economy in travelling and the inconvenience of crowding the hall both went to put a limit on the number of actors: four men and a boy, probably in apprenticeship to one of them, for the women's parts, may be taken as a normal troupe. . . . The simplest of scenic apparatus, and a few boards on trestles for a stage, had of course to suffice." It will be remembered how one of St Thomas More's earliest distinctions was that, whilst still a page under Cardinal Morton, he came suddenly upon the stage of an Interlude and improvised a scene of his own. From the halls of great folk they spread to those of the gentlemen of the Inns of Court, and again to the universities. The earliest Sir E. K. Chambers has noted are at Magdalen College, Oxford, from 1486 onward, overlapping in point of time the performances of *Quem Quaeritis?* in the chapel. In 1512 Oxford granted a degree in Grammar to Edward Watson on condition of his composing a comedy. St John's was the first at Cambridge, with the *Plutus* of Aristophanes in 1536; and it is very probable that

*Gammer Gurton's Needle* was first performed at Christ's. The Eton plays can be traced back to 1526, and it is quite possible that the Westminster boys' play is equally early.

It will be seen that the medieval hierarchy was not without excuse for frowning so often upon the popular drama, and giving so little encouragement to popular sports. For we must take into consideration not only the ultra-puritanism of St John Chrysostom with his "Christ was crucified, and dost thou laugh?" but the solid fact that nearly all these sports were prehistoric and therefore pre-Christian, and that they often gave the plainest testimony to that ancestry. For this I have given much fuller evidence in my *Medieval Village*, pp. 272 ff. Exaggerated stress is often laid nowadays upon the attitude of our early Reformers towards sport. "Every schoolboy", to use Macaulay's classical phrase, knows Macaulay's epigram that the Puritans objected to bear-baiting not because it gave pain to the bear but because it gave pleasure to the spectators. This is not true even as a direct statement: many Puritans were excellent sportsmen both in theory and in practice. But the wider implications which are often given to the statement are still less reconcilable with fact. When we come across sixteenth- or seventeenth-century clerics dealing with popular sports, it would be very difficult to decide on internal evidence whether the writer was on the Roman or the non-Roman side. Here are the words of the great Roman Catholic canonist Van Espen [1710]: "If we consider those dances, leapings and skippings which are performed nowadays, especially in the country among persons of both sexes, it will be evident that they exactly fit that which the Fathers have said about the spectacles and dances of their own day, and that, as St Charles Borromeo said, 'such meetings are scarcely ever brought about without many and most grievous offences against God'." Here Van Espen gives a whole list of sequelae, ringing from "foul thoughts" to "fornication and adultery".<sup>14</sup>

If this shocks us at first sight, we shall understand it when we consider the age and the circumstances. Here is an earnest man, bent upon great and serious truths, but somewhat warped

by his professional separation from, even while he mingles with, average humanity. Meanwhile, however, the average man goes very much upon his own average way. Whether in those distant days or in our own, the toiler needs (as Fénelon reminded his well-meaning *curé*) to forget, if only for one day in the week, the burden of his toil. Normally, the mere feeling of being alive is a pleasure, intense in proportion as it can consciously express itself: this human instinct is not denied even by those who may sneer at it as unreasonable. And if, in any age, that conscious expression of vitality is wild and ill regulated, some part of the fault must be charged to those who knew, and might have taught, better.

## 45. WOMEN'S LIFE

This is an enormous field, of which I can here touch only the fringe, in anticipation of the exhaustive study with which Professor Eileen Power has long been engaged. Meanwhile, however, those who wish to pursue the subject further should consult her article in *The Legacy of the Middle Ages* and her *Medieval English Nunneries*, together with Miss A. Abram's *English Life and Manners in the later Middle Ages*, and Thomas Wright's *Womankind in Western Europe*. For Renaissance women see P. S. Allen's *Age of Erasmus*, pp. 197-8.

There is, perhaps, no subject in which it would be more dangerous to judge from legislation alone. In law, medieval woman had certainly great disadvantages, of which the most startling was her crude subjection to physical violence. We find here a significant contrast between the much older Jewish civilization and that of these comparatively recent feudal lords whose Germanic fathers, not so many generations earlier, had broken in upon the Roman Empire. We must here recall that decision of Rabbi Perez, who died shortly before 1300. It is not an authoritative conciliar decision; but it represents fairly what an influential Rabbi attempted to enforce in his congregation. "The cry of the daughters of our people has been heard concerning the sons of Israel who raise their hands to strike their wives. Yet who has given a husband the authority to beat his wife? Is he not rather forbidden to strike any person in Israel? . . . Nevertheless have we heard of cases where Jewish women complained regarding their treatment before the Communities, and no action taken on their behalf. We have therefore decreed that any Jew may be compelled, on application of his wife or one of her near relatives, to undertake by a *herem* [written document] not to beat his wife in anger or cruelty or so as to disgrace her, for that is against Jewish practice. If anyone



will stubbornly refuse to obey our words, the Court of the place, to which the wife or her relatives will bring complaint, shall assign her maintenance according to her station and according to the custom of the place where she dwells. They shall fix her alimony as though her husband were away on a distant journey."<sup>1</sup> With this we may compare the pronouncement of a theological encyclopaedia of exactly this same period, by the Dominican Nicolas Byard. "A man may chastise his wife and beat her [*verberare*] for her correction; for she is of his household, and therefore the lord may chastise his own, as it is written in Gratian's *Decretum*, under the gloss *judicari*." The writer goes on to compare their relation in this respect to that of schoolmaster and schoolboy.<sup>2</sup> Turning to the text of Gratian referred to, we find: "A husband may judge his wife by correcting her, but not by beating her [*verberando*] . . . but he may chastise her [*castigare*] temperately, since she is of his household"; and this is followed by a reference to the *Code of Civil Law*, where *verberando* is forbidden. But the context seems to show clearly that our encyclopaedist applied this prohibition of "verberation" only to such systematic stripes as were permitted to a master in the case of a slave, and that the "temperate castigation" included an occasional hasty buffet. In two other passages of Gratian's *Decretum* this principle is more plainly laid down. A decree of the Council of Toledo (A.D. 400) prescribes that "if the wives of any clergy have sinned", the husbands may "keep them bound in their house, compelling them to salutary fasting, yet not unto death"; or, as the annotator puts it "macerating them with stripes [*verberibus*] and hunger". A third passage, again, runs: "The husband is bound to chastise his wife moderately, unless he be a cleric, in which case he may chastise her the harder" [*durius*], with a reference back to that earlier Toledo decree. Moreover, in the *Corpus Juris Canonici* these are quite in keeping with other passages concerning the relations of husband and wife. "It is a natural human order that the women should serve their husbands and the children their parents; for there is no justice where the greater serves the less."

"Woman was not made in God's image." "It is plain enough from this that wives should be subject to their husband, and should almost be servants"—*famulas*, a word often used for slaves. Again: "Since the husband is the head of the wife, while the man's head is Christ, every wife who is not subject to her husband, that is to her head, is guilty of the same offence as the man is when he is not subject unto Christ his head."<sup>3</sup> St Thomas More's treatment of this subject goes some way to bear out Professor Chambers's remark that there are even more medieval than modern features in his *Utopia*. For in that model community, "the eldest (as I said) ruleth the family. The wives be ministers to their husbands, the children to their parents, and, to be short, the younger to their elders." "The husbands chastise their wives, and the parents their children." "In the holy days that be the last days of the months and years, before they come to the church, the wives fall down prostrate before their husband's feet at home and the children before the feet of their parents, confessing and acknowledging themselves offenders either by some actual deed, or by omission of their duty, and desire pardon of their offence. Thus, if any cloud of privy displeasure was risen at home, by this satisfaction it is overblown, that they may be present at the sacrifices with pure and charitable minds."<sup>4</sup>

When we turn from Canon Law to Customary Law and practice, the case is still plainer. Léon Gautier, the great panegyrist of chivalry, confesses that "examples [of woman-beating] are plentiful in the best romances of adventure". He continues: "There are even two cases specified by the legislator, in which the husband's palm may lawfully fall upon his wife's back or nose: first, if she ever falls into the shame of adultery, and, secondly, if she permits herself to give her lord the lie. True, legislation tends to soften this; and good Beaumanoir of the thirteenth century, in his *Customs of Beauvoisis*, declares that the husband may beat his wife only 'reasonably'."<sup>5</sup> I have read that, in one of the new towns which were founded in Gascony about this time, one clause of the statutes ran: "Tout habitant de Villefranche a le droit de battre sa femme, pourvu que la mort ne s'ensuive pas." We

have conclusive evidence, again, from that *Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry* which sets forth the duties and usages of upper-class society, and which became the most popular manual of its kind not only in fourteenth-century France but in England and all the great European countries. There were eight printed editions before 1538 in French, English and German. In that book, the Knight tells his daughters how one wife had been rash enough to scold her husband most outrageously in public.<sup>6</sup> He continues: "And he, that was angry of her governance, smote her with his fist down to the earth; and then with his foot he struck her in the visage and brake her nose, and all her life after she had her nose crooked, the which shent and disfigured her visage after, that she might not for shame show her visage, it was so foul blemished. And this she had for her evil and great language, that she was wont to say to her husband." "For the nose is the fairest member that man or woman hath, and sitteth in the middle of the visage."

Let us pass on to other disabilities, of a kind which lasted on into more modern times, or which even exist sometimes to-day.

Women could inherit estates and titles; they could become baronesses, but not sit in parliament. The myth of a great abbess sitting among the lords, in virtue of her baronial dignity, has often been exploded. Stubbs wrote truly, "no lady of any rank whatever was ever summoned either in person or by proxy to a full and proper Parliament. There are instances of countesses, baronesses, and abbesses being summoned to send proxies or to furnish their military service, but not to attend Parliament as peeresses. The nearest approach to such a summons is that of 4 abbesses who, in 1306, were cited to the Great Council held to grant an aid on the knighting of the Prince of Wales."<sup>7</sup> Nor, again, had women real testamentary freedom. The Commons in Parliament complained (1344) how "prelates . . . allow serfs and women to make wills, which is against reason . . . may it please the king and his council to find remedy, so that his people may remain in the same estate as they were wont to have in the time of all

his progenitors". The answer ran: "The King wills that law and reason be kept in the matter."<sup>8</sup> In the struggle which ensued, the more liberal spirit of the Church was worsted, "and slowly the spiritual tribunals were brought to a reluctant admission that the wife has only such testamentary power as her husband is pleased to allow her, and that his consent can be revoked at any time before he has suffered the will to be proved". But, on the other hand, "the ecclesiastical lawyers themselves had not been able to formulate a clear theory about the matter".<sup>9</sup> Yet it is only fair to quote Vinogradoff's judgment that the Church was the most powerful opponent of the system which excluded women from the right of succession to land; and it was not Canon but Common Law which ruled that the word of women cannot be admitted in proof by the law-courts, "because of their frailty".<sup>10</sup>

Far more invidious was the law of "petty treason", though its incidence was naturally far less frequent. Under this head came originally any plot against the life, but in later times only the actual killing, of one's "lord": and the husband was the wife's lord, just as he was the servant's.<sup>11</sup> Thus, in 1386, "one Nigel Hakeneye was slain by his wife and servant-maid and the aforesaid Tydman; for which felony the said wife and servant-maid were burned, and the said Tydman fled away". In France and Germany, the penalty was sometimes burial alive. This scandal of death for petty treason survived the Reformation.

Again, women could not become licensed physicians. A petition to parliament sets forth how all kinds of unlearned men intermeddle with the practice of physic: let none but bachelors or doctors of medicine do thus, under pain of imprisonment and a fine of £2; the same penalty is pronounced upon any woman who practises.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, women were the natural herbalists and charm-doctors among the common folk. They were often forbidden to trade; for instance, in 1355, the London gild of brace-makers decreed "that no one of the said trade shall be so daring as to set any woman to work in his trade, other than his wedded wife or his daughter".<sup>13</sup> "Many craft regulations exclude female

labour, some because the work was considered too heavy, but most for the reason, with which we are familiar, that the competition of women undercut the men. Then, as now, women's wages were lower than those of men, even for the same work."<sup>14</sup> In many towns the statutes were indulgent to the widows of gildsmen, who might keep on the family business. At fifteenth-century Coventry, all single women of able body, and under the age of fifty, were compelled to "go to [domestic] service till they be married."<sup>15</sup> Women, of course, did a great deal of field-work; and the builders' account-rolls often show them working at the rougher jobs side by side with men. Miss A. Abram, who has published a study of *Women Traders in Medieval London*, concludes: "If we sum up the evidence gathered from the various sources which have passed under our review, we are led to the conclusion that the women traders of Medieval London were persons of strong character and undeniable business ability, and that they played a not inconsiderable and very useful part in the industrial life of the city."<sup>16</sup>

For in fact, where the capacity and the will exist, statutory restrictions are constantly swept away. So noted the Cambridge canonist John of Ayton, in the early fourteenth century. He is commenting on the statutes of Cardinal Ottobon (papal legate in England and afterwards Pope Hadrian V), which in their last clause prescribe that the official nunnery-visitors "shall cause the statutes here decreed to be exactly obeyed". At this point Ayton exclaims: "Cause to be obeyed! but certainly this almost passeth the wit of mortal man; therefore we must here insert the proviso 'so far as in them lieth'. . . . For the nuns answer roundly to these statutes, as to others which have been decreed to check their wantonness; 'The men who made these statutes sat well at their ease when they decreed these things against us, imposing such hard and intolerable restrictions!' Therefore we see plainly that these statutes are kept either ill or not at all. Wherefore then did the Holy Fathers thus labour to beat the air?"<sup>17</sup> Lina Duff-Gordon's *Home Life in Italy* shows us how in that country, although assertive and militant feminism

would stand no chance of success, yet the mother has in fact enormous power in her own household, making or unmaking the marriage of a grown-up son, and playing the domestic dictator within her own province, which is a region far wider than in other countries where women's liberties are more definitely asserted. The late Dr C. M. Doughty assured me that there was much of this also among the Bedouin Arabs, in spite of what might seem the utter legal subjection of the women.\* Guizot, again, points out the extent to which the medieval wife sometimes received and shouldered the whole burden of the family. In a baronial household, the eldest son was from childhood upwards a sort of Prince of Wales, beginning very early to share his father's power and responsibilities, yet in fact enormously under the influence of a strong-willed or able mother. We must not forget, also, that the medieval lady who might receive those blows was the true-blooded female of the lord who dealt them: a sister-spirit, it might be, to that countess who killed the architect of her castle lest he should go off and build one equally strong for someone else. Women's disabilities in medieval society were not of that steady and calculated quality, and had none of that leaden pressure which weighed upon the Turkish wife and daughter. We must rather think of them in terms of Thomas Carlyle's aristocratic patroness Lady Ashburton, who replied to a friend's "I should die if I were married to that man!" with "No, I should kill!" Let us remember Chaucer's Wife of Bath capable of reinforcing "the arrows of her crabbed eloquence" with her fist; and Harry Bailey's wife; and, in history, that Countess of Montfort whose defence of her husband's castle inspires some of Foissart's finest pages; or again, the heroine of Perelada; or Jeanne Hachette (who, as her nickname implies, cracked many skulls among the Burgundian besiegers of Beauvais) and Joan of Arc. Finally, we

\* Compare P. S. Allen's judgment on the society of A.D. 1500 (*Age of Erasmus*, p. 201): "The inference is probable that though the sphere of women was in many ways restricted, they were within their own dominion, the household, supreme—more so perhaps than they are to-day."

may count Agnes Paston, who faced even worse physical violence than her husband in defence of the family interests, and who was no less redoubtable to her children than to her enemies. For we find a lady-cousin writing to stress the necessity of getting one of Agnes's daughters married as soon as possible, seeing that the old lady is commonly at war with the girl, who "hath since Easter the most part been beaten once in the week or twice, and sometimes twice on one day, and her head broken [i.e. *blood drawn*] in two or three places."<sup>18</sup>

Have we not here one of the commonest of medieval phenomena, that custom counted more than written law? Our population, in the pre-Christian stage, had paid considerable respect to women, though this may have been not inconsistent with personal violence in a society where impulse often outweighed self-control. This is fully brought out in G. F. Browne's *Importance of Women in Anglo-Saxon Times* (S.P.C.K. 1919, p. 11). He writes: "In many of the tribes the chief deity was a goddess, worshipped with very reverential care. In time of peace the men in some of the tribes left to the women the management and the work of the farms which provided their means of support. It seems clear, too, that while the tribes worshipped a goddess, the men of the tribes ascribed to their women some mysterious force of insight and foresight. 'They conceive,' Tacitus says, 'that in woman is a certain uncanny and prophetic sense: they neither scorn to consult them nor slight their answers.'" This must be one of the reasons for the fact, which was noted as definitely by contemporaries as by modern scholars, that witches were numerous out of all proportion to the wizards. Again, Browne writes: "Plutarch tells us of the Celtæ that they were, from very early times indeed, firm believers in the wisdom of their women. . . . When Hannibal made a league with the Celtæ . . . this was the article which the Celts put into the conditions: 'If the Celtæ have complaints against the Carthaginians, the Carthaginian commander in Spain shall judge it. But if the Carthaginians have anything to lay to the charge of the Celtæ, it shall be brought before the

Celtic women.'"<sup>19</sup> The Roman Church took, on the whole, a different view, laying disproportionate stress upon St Paul's dictum that the woman must not speak in Church. The Wife of Bath had only too much reason to complain:

*For, trusteth wel, it is an impossible  
That any clerk wol speke good of wyvës—  
But if it be of hooly Seintës lyvës—  
Ne of noon oother womman never the mo.*

Chaucer's friend Gower emphasizes the inferiority of the sex from Creation onwards: otherwise the Almighty would have fashioned Eve not from Adam's rib but from his head.\* A few years later, St Bernardino of Siena exercised his almost unrivalled pulpit eloquence against female fashions. Addressing the typical over-dressed woman in his congregation, he cries, "Oh, if it were my business, if I were your husband, I would give you such a drubbing with feet and fists, that I would make you remember for a while!"<sup>20</sup> More than a century later, in 1530, the year of the so-called "Reformation Parliament", a *Commentary on the Rule of St Augustine* was addressed to Abbot Mylne of Cambuskenneth, from the convent at Paris, by one of his special pupils. This Robert Richardson, coming to that passage where St Augustine warns his devotees against the fair sex, outdoes even that which, in Chaucer, men sometimes imagine to be a mere caricature. Woman, he writes, "has always been the most conspicuous mischief of the human race. For she is an animal prouder than the lion, that fiercest and proudest of the brute creation; more wanton than the ape; more venomous than the asp; more false and deceitful than the syren. Nor can any of the fiercest beasts be worthily compared with the feminine mon-

\* Herein he exaggerates from the far more moderate judgment of Peter Lombard, in those *Sentences* which were the great textbook of medieval theology. Peter writes (bk. II, dist. xviii c.): "She was formed from man's side, to show that she was created for his consort, lest perchance, if she had been made from his head, she should seem to be preferred above him in domination; or, if from his feet, then to be subject to him in slavery." From the side therefore, "in order that he should learn to place her beside himself whom he had learned to have been taken from his rib".



ster. The lions feared Daniel in their den, and so did the dragon; yet mad Jezebel slew the righteous Naboth. Jonas escaped from the whale's belly; pet Samson, stoutest of mankind, escaped not the hands of his own wife. John Baptist lived many years unhurt among dragons and asps; yet Herodias no sooner knew him than she slew him. Why should I pursue this matter further?" yet further our Robert pursues it, like his namesake Robert Montgomery, for half a page more; and he reverts to it twice or thrice later.<sup>21</sup> It would be difficult to find any parallel to the far more favourable comparison which Professor Power quotes from a Cambridge MS., except, of course, in poetry. There the troubadour stood a whole horizon apart from the preacher: "so that women found themselves perpetually oscillating between a pit and a pedestal."<sup>22</sup>

Moreover whereas papal legislation accepted resignedly the habitual breach of St Benedict's rule of claustration by his male devotees, Boniface VIII insisted upon the strictest and most harem-like seclusion for the nuns; so strict that it was scarcely ever maintained in its completeness. For, here again, Canon Law drew a clear line between the sexes; the nun is a Spouse of Christ; therefore unchastity on her part involves three crimes, incest, sacrilege, and adultery.<sup>23</sup> It is from Canon Law also that the Anglican Church has drawn that sentence of the marriage service which lends itself most to modern criticism. "Of two evils", writes Gratian, "the least should be chosen; and this is proved by the example of St Paul, who conceded the less evil, that is, marriage and conjugal intercourse, by reason of incontinence, in order that the greater and more grievous alternative of fornication should be avoided."<sup>24</sup> Marriage, he writes elsewhere, is like a sea-voyage; for "even as he who goeth by ship subjecteth himself to divers perils, nor is he ruled by his own impulses but by the winds, so is it with him that hath a wife". It is often asserted, off-hand, that the Mary-cult did much to raise women's status in the Middle Ages. No doubt it had some effect; but there seems no evidence for any far-reaching influence in that direction. The Virgin-Mother stood, in

common idea, too far above ordinary humanity to suggest any immediate connection, except as a semi-divine intercessor; as a being who could not be thought of as a Jewess without something of a religious shock; such is the story that St Thomas More tells us *à propos* of a lady of his own day.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, time does seem to have done something solid for women's emancipation. It is strange to find the first philosophical plea in this direction from the Mohammedan Averroës, in the late twelfth century. He argued that women differ from men not in quality but in degree; they are apt to all men's occupations, though to a less degree. Sometimes they even surpass them. The example of certain African states shows their aptitude for war; and there would be nothing extraordinary in their reaching the government of the state. Among sheep-dogs, does not the female guard the flock just as well as the male?<sup>26</sup> The late thirteenth and the fourteenth century seem to show an unusual proportion of conspicuous women-mystics, spending much of their lives in a state of half-trance, receiving divine revelations as to the wickedness of the world, and threatening clergy and people with sudden vengeance in default of speedy repentance and conversion. Again, Dubois the Frenchman and the Englishman Ockham had, on this subject, ideas which must have seemed revolutionary in their age. Dubois would have a specially educated class of women-missionaries.<sup>27</sup> The girls should be taught theology and medicine, and sent out either to the clergy of the Greek Church—where, since there had never been any rule of priestly celibacy, the priests might be specially impressionable to the proselytism of such advocates—or to the Muslim and other infidels. Such peaceful matrimonial penetration, he feels very reasonably, might go far to atone for the military failures of the Crusades. Ockham, for his part, demanded ecclesiastical constitutionalism as a substitute for the prevailing papal despotism.<sup>28</sup> Christendom was to be ruled no longer autocratically, but by a systematic series of world-councils; and, since women also have souls to save, why should not they likewise have votes? This feminism culminates in the Bible-translator Tyndale, who, in his controversy with St Thomas

More, argued for some degree of ecclesiastical equality not only in an imaginary Utopia but in ordinary workaday England. He wrote: "Women be no meet vessels to rule or to preach, for both are forbidden them; yet hath God endowed them with his Spirit at sundry times, and shewed his power and goodness upon them, and wrought wonderful things by them, because he would not have them despised. We read that women have judged all Israel, and have been great prophetesses, and have done mighty deeds. Yea, and if stories be true, women have preached since the opening of the New Testament. Do not our women now christen and minister the sacrament of baptism in time of need? Might they not, by as good reason, preach also, if necessity required? If a woman were driven into some island, where Christ was never preached, might she there not preach him, if she had the gift thereto? Might she not also baptize? And why might she not, by the same reason, minister the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, and teach them how to choose officers and ministers?"<sup>29</sup>

Throughout the later Middle Ages we find, for what they are worth, fairly frequent complaints of growing feminine licence. We must discount these as we do all medieval complaints of a wicked present contrasted with a golden age in the past; but they have some reality at the back of them. Abbot Guibert de Nogent, the friend of St Bernard, concludes the picture of his own admirable mother with bitter reflections on his own time.<sup>30</sup> "Lord, thou knowest how hardly—nay, almost how impossibly—that virtue [of chastity] is kept by women of our time: whereas of old there was such modesty that scarce any marriage was branded even by common gossip! Alas, how miserably, between those days and ours, maidenly modesty and honour have fallen off, and the mother's guardianship has decayed both in appearance and in fact; so that in all their behaviour nothing can be noted but unseemly mirth, wherein are no sounds but jest, with winking eyes and babbling tongues, and wanton gait. . . . By these modern fashions, and others like them, this age of ours is corrupted and spreads further corruption." The

Knight of La Tour-Landry, again, would place the age of real modesty about the time of his own and Chaucer's father, a date by which, according to Guibert's calculations, the growing shamelessness of the world ought long ago to have worn God's patience threadbare. Each was so far right that he lived (as we all do) in a time of transition, and that he saw (as we too see) much that might certainly be changed for the better. One cause that made for the increase of woman's freedom was the growth of the towns. "In some respects the Bourgeoisie showed a greater sense of the normal personality of women than did either the Aristocracy or the Church, borough law had to take account of the woman trader, and in many towns there existed 'customs' for the treatment of a married woman carrying on a trade of her own as a *femme sole*. These are in striking contrast with the laws regulating the position of the married woman under the common law; and, although they were intended for the protection of the husband, they were also an effective improvement in the status of the wife."<sup>31</sup>

Social freedom was greater then, as it naturally is everywhere, within the highest class and the lowest, the nobles and the peasants. Then, as now, Mrs Grundy was a bourgeoisie. The books of deportment which have come down to us were naturally rather for the middle classes, and they are painful in their primness. The *Good Wife* warns her daughter—

*And when thou goest in the way, go thou not too fast,  
Brandish not with thy head, nor with thy shoulders cast.*

The *Ménagier de Paris* writes to his young wife: "If you are walking out, go with your head turned straight forward, your eyelids low and fixed, and your look straight before you down to the ground at twelve yards, without turning your eyes on man or woman, to the right or to the left, or staring upwards, or moving your eyes about from one place to another, or laughing, or stopping to talk to anyone in the streets."<sup>32</sup> The maiden, when seated, was expected to keep her hands crossed on her lap: this is alluded to as customary even as late as the end of the sixteenth century in France. In England, side by side with a good many formalities now

forgotten, there was one custom in Erasmus's day which delighted him. Writing back to a friend at Paris University, he celebrates in classical hyperboles the attractiveness of our girls, and adds: "The English also have a custom which can never be enough extolled. Whithersoever you go, you are received with kisses by all present; at your departure they send you off with kisses. You come back: kisses again. They come to you, kisses are handed round; they quit you with a fresh distribution of kisses. We meet in the streets with copious kisses; in short, whithersoever we turn, it is a whole world of osculation. If you, dear friend, ever tasted how soft and sweet these are, you would desire to leave your home not for ten years, as Solon did, but as a sojourner in England unto death."<sup>33</sup>

When the English girl came to possess children of her own, her turn of legal domination arrived at least over that portion of the family. The *Good Wife* advises her daughter:

*And if thy children be rebèl, and will not them low,  
If any of them misdoeth, neither ban them nor blow*

[*curse nor cuff*]

*But take a smart rod, and beat them on a row*

*Till they cry for mercy, and be of their guilt acknow.<sup>34</sup>*

[*acknowledge*]

Small girls sometimes went to the elementary schools with boys; and a few outside girls, and even boys, were occasionally taught by the nuns in their convents. These pupils, however, were very commonly discouraged, and sometimes actually forbidden, by the visiting bishop or other authority, since such teaching of outsiders found no place in the Benedictine Rule, and disciplinarians feared more disturbance of conventual discipline than benefit to the pupils. Nor was higher education often encouraged. The Knight of La Tour-Landry probably voices the average opinion when he writes: "Howbeit there be suche men that have opynion that thei wolde not that [t]her wyves nor [t]her doughtres shulde knowe no thinge of the scripture. As touchinge unto the holy scripture, it is no force [it matters not] thoughe women medille not nor knowe but litelle therof but forto rede [for]

every woman it is the better that [she] canne rede and have knowinge of the lawe of God."<sup>35</sup> Most men of our period would have agreed heartily with what Diderot puts into the mouth of Rameau's nephew. The interlocutor has expressed his desire of teaching his daughter "à raisonner juste, si je puis; chose si peu commune parmi les hommes, et plus rare encore parmi les femmes". To which the nephew answers: "Eh! laissez-la déraisonner autant qu'elle voudra, pourvu qu'elle soit jolie, amusante et coquette."

Yet, though very few women arrived at anything like the university stage in education, it seems probable that more of them could read and write than the men, especially in the upper classes at the period of the romances of adventure. Doubtless they were more flexible, as in our own day they are far better linguists, having less of that masculine dignity which forbids our stooping to conquer so vulgar a thing as the common speech of foreign people. Then, as now, the women were the main readers of romances and the main church-goers.<sup>36</sup> In the higher classes, they were often devoted to sport. John of Salisbury, in his polemic against contemporary devotion to hunting and neglect of philosophy or literature, argues that we may condemn the former "from the bare fact that the worser [*deterior*] sex is the more skilful at hawking; a fact which might give room for complaint against Nature, unless we noted that the worser elements are always more prone to rapine".<sup>37</sup>

It may be just worth while to note that Erasmus, who knew so many countries, seems to bracket English women with their Italian sisters as specially devoted to finery of dress. (Comment on I Tim. ii. 9, printed by Jortin, vol. II, p. 223.)

## 46. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

We come now to one of the most important questions of all; that of the marriage contract. One fair rough criterion of any civilization is the clearness and sanctity of its contracts. And, in this particular matter, the woman has far more interest than the man; for, as the physically weaker party, and the less able to stand up by herself against economic competition, she suffers far more through the break-up of a household and the care of the derelict children; nor can we imagine any state of society—unless, perhaps, we ever arrived at mechanical incubation, as with poultry—in which she would not be the party more interested in stability of marriage than her mate.

From Adam and Eve onwards, the woman's duty had always been to spin; thus *spinster* became a natural designation for an unmarried girl. In early European civilization (e.g. under Charlemagne) there were great spinning-chambers, *gynaecea*, for the girls. "The great emperor was so anxious that womankind should be employed in productive labour, that he made his own daughters work in the domestic gynaeceum as diligently as the other females."<sup>1</sup> Though these seem to have died out gradually, until economic progress revived the system again in fifteenth-century England, and much earlier in Italy and the Low Countries, yet there was always a tendency, natural in medieval circumstances, to deal with the younger female population in the mass. In 1285, a French lord manumitted by will, "for the health of my soul, one hundred girls from my two estates".<sup>2</sup> No less than sixty-five of these were named Jeanne; not a single Mary or her mother Anne; those names were too sacred for ordinary girls.

There were necessarily a good many single women, even outside the nunneries. For those, after all, absorbed only a very small fraction of the total spinster population: the nuns

did not number one-twentieth of the men who, as clerics in major orders or cloisterers, were similarly withdrawn from the marriage-market. Miss Abram notes how that Coventry regulation testifies to an appreciable number of single women among the working classes. Yet, among the upper classes, this was different; it was so natural for the unmarried daughters to be dowered to a convent, in default of sufficient dowry for a husband, that the "old maid" was as unusual a phenomenon in the Middle Ages as in modern upper-class French society. Pollock and Maitland write: "It is hardly too much to say that the early Medieval law never seems to have contemplated the existence of an unmarried woman of full age. . . . Her position is never the subject of statute law, as is that of widows; hence it seems probable that among the higher classes the independent 'femme sole' was, outside the convent, a negligible quantity."<sup>3</sup>

Thus the *mariage de convenance* was the normal arrangement in every class, from the noble to the peasant. "They were often dedicated solely by the interests of the land. 'Let me not to the marriage of true fiefs admit impediments' may be said to have been the dominating motive of a great lord with a son or daughter or ward to marry."<sup>4</sup> Pollock and Maitland, from the purely legal point of view, sum up: "In Henry III's day a marriage between a boy of four or five years and a girl who was no older seems capable of ratification, and as a matter of fact parents and guardians often betrothed, or attempted to betroth, children who were less than seven years old. Even the Church could say no more than that babies in the cradle were not to be given in marriage, except under the pressure of some urgent need, such as the desire for peace."<sup>5</sup> Léon Gautier, on the other hand, studying the great chivalric romances of adventure, where he finds the *mariage de convenance* painfully prominent, confesses: "Whatever may be said, those are not the conditions for truly free marriage, or, to speak plainly, for a truly Christian one." Erasmus felt much the same: he wrote: "In Britain, the sons of noblemen come into the power of guardians if their father dies; this right is bought or obtained



from the king. Whenever such a guardianship falls out of the family, then the ward's possessions are sometimes so dealt with that he can hope for little fruit from his lands unless he marries the wife prescribed by his guardian. . . . And this they call matrimony, although the Roman Civil Law took care that the guardian or tutor should not marry the girl committed to his charge, nor even his children should so marry : yet Church Law forbiddeth it not."<sup>6</sup>

Let us take three concrete instances of matrimonial suits. Pollock and Maitland quote a case from about A.D. 1200.<sup>7</sup> Grace, though probably a supposititious child, passed as daughter to Sir Thomas of Saleby, and was therefore a great heiress. The king gave her in ward, on Thomas's death, "to Adam Neville, the chief forester's brother. When she was but four years old, Adam proposed to marry her. The bishop forbade the marriage; but, whilst the bishop was in Normandy, the marriage was solemnized by a priest. . . . King John sold Grace to his chamberlain Norman for two hundred marks; and, when Norman died, the king sold the poor girl once more for three hundred marks to the third and worst of all her husbands, Brian de Lisle. In the end she died childless." Here, again, are two from the Lichfield episcopal registers.<sup>8</sup>

*"Report of the progress of dissolution of marriage between John, son of John de Arde[r]ne, Kt., and Cecilia, daughter of Nicholas de Eton, Kt.\** The libel, supported by the evidence of witnesses who had known the parties from their infancy, was that they were married in the face of the Church when under marriageable age, John being about 11; that John always said he would not consent, and moved the question of dissolution directly he came of age; that these facts are well known in the Parishes of Aldeford, Stopport, and Prestbury, and the neighbourhood. The witnesses called were William de Wevere, aged 40 and upwards, freeman, Henry de Raven-croft, aged 38 and upwards, freeman, and John Buchard (or Bruchard) aged 40 and upwards, freeman. . . . Judgment was

\* This marriage was no doubt arranged by John's stepmother, who was also Cecilia's mother. Joan de Stokport married first Sir Nich. de Eton, and afterwards Sir John de Arderne. See Ormerod's *Cheshire*.

given on the Monday after Palm Sunday, and the marriage declared null and void."<sup>9</sup> Shortly afterwards, in 1378, "before the Bishop sitting as a tribunal in the chapel of his manor of Heywood at the hour of prime in the presence of a notary and witnesses, William Thiknes, of noble birth [*domicellus*], aged 70 and upwards, appeared and declared that when he was 12 he married of his own free will Elizabeth Cune [Coyney], aged 8, and they regarded each other as husband and wife. When he was 20, moved by what spirit he knew not, he was secretly married—without saying anything about his former marriage—to Katherine Smynnerton; the ceremony was performed in the oratory of his manor of Thiknes by the Chaplain who was then ministering there. Banns were not published and the required solemnities of law were omitted. By Katherine he had offspring, William and Eve, still surviving, and seven other sons and daughters now dead. All this time Elizabeth was alive and not divorced, being at once a maid and a wife, as she affirmed to her confessor at the time of her death. When Katherine died, he married publicly, after banns, Margery de Audeley, who is still surviving, and by her had offspring, who are now regarded as his right heirs. He said that he made this statement not from hate or love of any of his sons or daughters, but that all might have justice, and he prayed that a record should be made of the facts, which the Bishop ordered to be done."<sup>9</sup>

Among quite ordinary townsfolk, there was often not enough money at stake to make expensive litigation profitable: but we commonly get dry indications such as this, from the fifteenth-century Chancery records. "William Durham and Margaret his wife, daughter of John Walker, complainants. William Smyth, of Olcotys, Co. York defendant. Action brought concerning the dower of the said Margaret, paid to the said William Smyth on agreement that one of his sons should wed her."<sup>10</sup> Among village-folk, again, it was in medieval England as in Molière's France: "*Les pères et les mères ont la maudite coutume de demander toujours Qu'a-t-il? et Qu'a-t-elle? et le compère Pierre a marié sa fille Simonette au gros Thomas pour un quartier de vigne qu'il avait*

davantage que le jeune Robin où elle avait toute son amitié."\*<sup>11</sup> Those who have intimate knowledge of French society warn us against too hasty judgments on the results, and point out that there is often a very healthy *camaraderie* between such a husband and wife. But that difference does exist, and cannot be left out of account, between the ordinary English marriage in Chaucer's day and in ours. We may perhaps find a curious inverted romanticism in the pity which moved St Thomas More to choose the elder sister while his personal preference pointed to the younger; but nothing of that kind marked his second marriage.<sup>12</sup> As described by Erasmus, that union was Utopian on one of those points where Utopian manners were rather medieval than modern. "A few months after the death of the first he chose a widow, rather for the care of his family than for delight, 'neither a beauty nor a maid', as himself was wont to say in jest, but a keen and vigilant materfamilias; yet he lived as gently and smoothly with her as though she had been the fairest of maidens. Scarce doth any husband get so much obedience by command and severity as this man doth by blandishments and jests. What could he not obtain, seeing that this woman, already aging, and far from soft in disposition, finally gave the strictest attention and learned to play on the cithern, the harp and the clavichord, and that, at her husband's request, she daily performs the prescribed task at these instruments?"

Again, there was an even greater difference in the legal contrast itself. On the one hand, marriage was definitely claimed as a Sacrament, from Peter Lombard onwards. It is true that, even thus, one of the greatest Schoolmen, Guillaume Durand, explicitly admitted that it cannot be called a Sacrament in the strict sense,<sup>13</sup> and the present orthodox doctrine was not made a question of faith until the Council of Trent; yet the whole later Middle Ages were sufficiently unanimous in favour of this sacramental claim to justify the Church's

\* "Fathers and mothers have the accursed custom of always asking *How much has he?* and *How much has she?* and old Peter has married his daughter Simonette to fat Thomas, for a little bit of vineyard that he had beyond young Robin, upon whom she had set her heart."

insistence that she herself should be the sole judge in matrimonial cases. But, on the other hand, what with the inherent difficulties of the subject, and the historical difficulties, and the Church's own hesitations and lack of clear thought, the matrimonial litigation of the Middle Ages was not only among the most frequent but also among the most hopelessly perplexed.

We must never for a moment forget that the Church had here a very difficult task. She had to do her best to avoid a clash with old Roman Law on the one hand, and, on the other, the unwritten immemorial customs of the semi-barbarian tribes which she had converted. Yet, in spite of the late Master of Balliol's protest, it is difficult to avoid the conclusions of Pollock and Maitland in their *History of English Law*: "Reckless of mundane consequences, the Church, while she treated marriage as a formless contract, multiplied impediments which made the formation of a valid marriage a matter of chance. . . . When we weigh the merits of the medieval Church and have remembered all her good deeds, we have to put into the other scale as a weighty counterpoise the incalculable harm done by a marriage law which was a maze of flighty fancies and misapplied logic." And, giving a concrete case in full, from the year 1302, they add: "After reading this judgment it is difficult to believe that the ecclesiastical courts were pre-eminently fit to administer the law of marriage and divorce."

For, although marriage was extolled as a Sacrament of the Church, the Church was not indispensable: the parties themselves were the only necessary celebrants. The mere exchange of a verbal pledge, "I take thee to my wife" (or "husband"), followed by cohabitation, without priest or Church ceremony of any kind, and even without witnesses of any kind, constituted a marriage as valid before God as if the Pope himself had been the celebrant. Such a marriage was indeed "irregular"; the parties were liable to severe punishment if the Church courts chose to proceed against them; but of its validity there could be no question, though of course this would be impossible to prove unless both parties testified

on oath to facts which they alone knew. Moreover, mere children were perfectly competent to bind themselves thus: the boy need only be fourteen and the girl twelve, a difference which our canonist Ayton ungallantly explains by the proverb "ill weeds grow apace".

On the other hand, the most carefully arranged marriage, celebrated with every precaution in the face of the Church, might be invalidated by the discovery of certain fairly numerous impediments, of which the most important lay in consanguinity or affinity. If the parties were related within the fourth degree—that is, if they had a common great-great-grandparent—then their union was null and void, unless a papal dispensation could be procured. In the average village, where there were only about seventy families, the arithmetical chances of finding a mate outside those prohibited degrees must have been small. In the days when the prohibition extended to seven degrees—that is, until the Lateran Council of 1215—they must have been almost negligible. But we hear of little matrimonial legislation between villagers, because there it was seldom sufficiently to anyone's interest to upset a marriage and transfer an inheritance. Among the nobility, on the other hand, litigation was constant. For not only blood-relationship was reckoned, but affinity through marriage; and, as a last straw, affinity at the baptismal font. This was a strong social bond, as the term *gossip* denotes; God-sibs were folk related as godmother or godfather at the baptism of the same child. The Church made this into a matrimonial impediment; and here was a great resource in unjust or collusive divorces. If one party, or both, could not swear to some too-late discovered consanguinity, they could at least swear to "gossipy", in days when baptismal registers were unknown.

Again, even in the weddings conducted with scrupulous conformity to the Church ritual, there were many survivals from less refined times which disgusted a fastidious scholar like Erasmus.<sup>14</sup> He complains that the marriage preliminaries themselves are almost more indecent than among the heathen. Thence, after the Church ceremony, the pair are brought home

to "a public and tumultuous feast. They rise from table to join in wanton dances until supper, where the tender girl cannot refuse any man, but the house is open to the whole city. Then the unhappy maiden is compelled to join hands with the drunken, the scabby, and sometimes with criminals who are come more intent upon theft than upon dancing: in Britain she must even kiss with them. After an uproarious supper, dancing again, then fresh drinking: scarce can the wearied pair go to bed even after midnight. After a scanty interval, all revel with mad tumult at the chamber door, burst into the room, with obscene words, and return to the madness of yestreen. For, in some regions, this Corybantic fury is prolonged for three days. . . . Is this the way to enter into a Sacrament?" Not only were monks forbidden to attend weddings, for propriety's sake, but the Rule of the Third Order of St Francis extended the prohibition to pious lay-folk also.<sup>15</sup>

In theory, divorce did not exist for the medieval Church; the marriage was marriage for ever. Though the word *divortium* was commonly used in chronicles and official documents, perhaps as commonly as any other, yet the most that the Church ever decreed in the strictest sense was nullity; she decided that, owing to some fatal impediment, there never had been true marriage, and the parties were therefore now as free as though they had never lived together. Again, she might recognize incompatibilities, or other reasons for a *separation from bed and board*; they were indeed married, but need no longer live together; yet this separation gave them no power of contracting any other lawful union. But the frequency with which the word *divortium* was used, even by lawyers, might in itself suggest the partial survival of something very like the real thing *divorce*; and we have in fact abundant evidence to this effect. As Léon Gautier again confesses, "after a few years of marriage, a husband who wearied of his wife [in the upper classes] could suddenly discover that they were related . . . and here was a revival, under canonical and pious forms, of the ancient practice of divorce."<sup>16</sup> "Nor was even this subterfuge necessary in the

Dark Ages. Pope Gregory II (726) decided that, if a wife is incurably sick, the husband may marry another, so long as he does not neglect to support the first. Two early Church Councils ruled to the same effect."<sup>17</sup> Bishop Jonas of Orleans [840] complains that men cast off their wives if they find them to be of servile condition; others, having dissipated their wives' dowries or changed their own humour, "shamelessly desert them, delighting in prudent and handsomer and wealthier mates".<sup>18</sup> St Peter Damian (d. 1072) lived under the eyes of many Popes at Rome, and was a bosom-friend of the great Gregory VII. He stigmatized the society of his day, in plain terms, as less obedient to the laws of religion, in many cases, than the very pagans. Gregory VII, he says, held in this very year a great council in which he condemned and excommunicated all irregular unions between man and woman; "yet, among so many thousands of these [offending] folk, who has seen a single one torn away from the abomination of this unhallowed contract?" Where a separation does take place, it is often because the man, repenting a bargain that is now wearisome, "weaves a false line of consanguinity; he accumulates proofs to fabricate unheard of names of ancestors, and appeals for evidence in support of this allegation to old folk whom he well knows to have long ended their life in this world. . . . Indeed, the laws are put up for sale, and money justifies the delinquents. . . . Money sets the laws in motion, and the false interpreter bends its obscure sentences to his own meaning. Money softens the judge's heart with the oil of unrighteousness towards the rich, while it impels him to exercise the rigour of rigid punishment upon the poor."<sup>19</sup> St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury 1093-1109, echoing the words of his predecessor Lanfranc, writes to the King of Ireland: "We hear that marriages, in your kingdom, are dissolved and changed without any reason. . . . It is said that men exchange their wives for those of other men as freely and publicly as any one changes one horse for another." Petrus Cantor, one of the greatest and most pious writers of about 1200, condemned on this point the Church in general. He writes of the extent to which Church law is

stultified by "dispensations" which flatly contradict the original legislation, and continues: "See also how that most holy Sacrament of the Church, viz. Matrimony, by reason of traditions concerning the third degree of affinity, and certain other traditions, becomes at one moment invalid, at another sound and firm, through the chatterings of advocates, who rely upon the nets of tradition in order thus to fill their own purses and empty those of other people, so that the Sacrament of Matrimony is turned to derision among the layfolk."\* Peter tells us also that Ivo Bishop of Chartres, the greatest Church lawyer of the century, was so outraged by the absurd complexity of papal regulations on this subject that "in his indignation, he cast to the ground the volume of [papal] decretals, as a worthless and useless book".<sup>20</sup> A satire of the time of Edward II tells the same tale:<sup>21</sup>

*If a man have a wyf,  
And he love her nowt,  
Bryng hyr to the constery                    [consistory court,  
Ther trewth schuld be wrowt.  
Bring twei fals wytnes with hym,  
And hymself the thrydde,  
And he schal be deperted                    [separated  
As fair as he wold bydde,  
From his wyf;  
He shal be mayntend fulle wel                    [backed up  
To lede a sory lyf.                    [disreputable*

*When he is deperted  
From his trew spouse,  
Take his neyghēborēs wyf  
And bryng her to house.  
Gif he have selver*

\* Migne, *P.L.* vol. 203, 235. But Migne has here omitted the words which follow in the best MS (Trin. Coll. Camb. 372). After *layfolk* this runs on: "for they say, 'I will marry this woman and grow rich [with her money], for I will leave her whenever I wish and let her be in the third degree of affinity to me'."



*Among the clerkes to sende,  
He may have hir to hys wyf  
To hys lifes ende*

*With onskylle*

[unreason

*Thei that so fair with falsenes dele,*

*Goddess corse on [t]her bille!* [charter, writ

The Dominican Bromyard, in Chaucer's day, describes the abuses in detail, and sums up, "nowadays, when a wife displeases, or another woman is coveted, then a divorce is procured"—*divortium procuratur*.<sup>22</sup> The contemporary poem of *Piers Plowman* tells the same tale; a man may get rid of his wife by giving a judge a fur cloak; Church lawyers "make and unmake matrimony for money".<sup>23</sup> Chaucer's friend John Gower complained, in his turn, of the complexity of papal decrees as to marriage, and of the ease with which one could evade them by bribery at the fountain-head. He asks: "How can it really be a mortal sin to violate these prohibitions, when one may always buy a dispensation? This is simply to manufacture fresh sins for the sake of filthy lucre."<sup>24</sup> Finally, Erasmus criticized the whole system cautiously, but severely, in his treatise *On the Institution of Christian Marriage*, addressed to Queen Katharine of Aragon. He exposed, in plainest language, both the difficulty of knowing for certain whether two persons were within the forbidden degrees of relationship, and the fatal folly of allowing a boy of fourteen and a girl of twelve to contract a valid marriage without priest or witnesses by the mere exchange of verbal promise followed by cohabitation. Why (he asks) cannot Popes make the marriage contract as secure as Civil Law makes contracts of far less importance? Then, "the world will not see so many unhappy and perplexed marriages, nor so many divorces." "The Emperor's law, and national decrees, are vigilant lest any quarrel arise from men's contracts with each other: yet such is human perversity that no contract gives rise to more trouble than that of matrimony. The cause seems to lie partly in the nature of the subject, but partly in the collision between State Law and Church Law. . . . Church Law itself is sometimes self-contradictory." As things now are, "it is no

uncommon case, especially in France, for a girl of scarce ten years to be married and a mother next year. . . . It seems portentous, and yet we sometimes see it, especially in Britain and in Italy, that a tender child is married to a septuagenarian. . . . Yet Church laws do not rescind such nuptials, although they are satirized by public jests and epigrams."<sup>23</sup> This was written in 1526; and, in 1530, Pope Clement VII was willing to negotiate with Henry VIII on the basis that he should be allowed two wives simultaneously. It was asserted publicly, with great probability, that his predecessor Eugenius IV, in 1437, had given a similar permission to Henry IV of Castile.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, although St Thomas More was ready to die rather than commit the lie of the soul by admitting Henry VIII's superiority over the Pope in matters of marriage law and Church authority, yet we cannot legitimately argue from that to his Utopians' attitude towards divorce. It by no means follows that this most remarkable of all More's writings was a mere *jeu d'esprit*; that it was no mirror of the writer's serious hopes for world-betterment. Nor can we even press the divorce question into support of the more moderate view that *Utopia* is at best a picture of bare worldly prosperity, apart from the all-important theological virtues. In *Utopia*, More tells us, "matrimony is never broken, but by death; except adultery break the bond, or else the intolerable wayward manners of either party. For if either of them find themselves for any such cause grieved, they may by the licence of the council change and take another. But the other party liveth ever after in infamy and out of wedlock. Howbeit the husband to put away his wife for no other fault, but for that some mishap is fallen to her body, this by no means they will suffer. For they judge it a great point of cruelty, that anybody in their most need of help and comfort should be cast off and forsaken, and that old age, which both bringeth sickness with it, and is a sickness itself, should unkindly and unfaithfully be dealt withal. But now and then it chanceth, where as the man and the woman cannot well agree between themselves, both of them finding [some] other with whom they hope to live more quietly and merrily, that they, by the

full consent of them both, be divorced asunder and married again to other. But that not without the authority of the council, which agreeth to no divorces before they and their wives have diligently tried and examined the matter. Yea, and then also they be loath to consent to it, because they know this to be the next way to break love between man and wife, to be in easy hope of a new marriage. Breakers of wedlock be punished with most grievous bondage. And if both offenders were married, then the parties which in that behalf have suffered wrong, being divorced from the adulterers, be married together, if they will, or else to whom they lust."<sup>27</sup> When we compare this with what his friend Erasmus wrote some ten years later, it is difficult to believe that the suggestions here put forward in *Utopia* were not sober and serious.<sup>28</sup> For it is agreed on all sides that the book is a direct criticism of contemporary society, and especially of England at that date. Erasmus says in so many words in his letter to Hutten: "His *Utopia* was written to indicate the points on which states are least well managed, and he had Britain especially in his eye, since that was what he saw most clearly and knew best." Wherever the Utopians are described as doing anything remarkable, we must look for a blamable, or at least questionable, lack of such doings in Henry VIII's England; and, conversely, the Utopians are remarkable for avoiding just those things for which English society could be most seriously criticized. When, therefore, the absence of cruel desertion is extolled in this imaginary prosperous republic, it can scarcely be that the author wrote without mental reference to what, as a lawyer, he must have known as a frequent occurrence in England, under cover of those hypocritical formalities which only increased the essential barbarity of the deed.

The subject is so important for the history of civilization, and our great modern difficulties in this field may be so much assisted by sidelights from the past, that, at the risk of prolixity, I must give here some more concrete evidence. The reader may thus realize how much work there was for the archdeacon or rural dean of the Middle Ages, and what complications came in whenever it was to anybody's interest

to dispute a marriage; whether the litigant were one of the pair, anxious to get free, or some relation gaping for an inheritance.

The *Durham Depositions*, published by the Surtees Society in 1845, record the proceedings of an archidiaconal court. The book is mostly concerned with cases of incontinence, followed by public fustigation of the guilty parties round the parish church for one or more days. But, incidentally, it casts most significant sidelights on the actual working of medieval marriage law.<sup>29</sup> In 1435, "Robert Barker hath contracted matrimony and fornicated with Jane Fawdon. The man confesseth the crime, but denieth the contraction of matrimony. He is to have three fustigations, and the woman two, round the church of Billingham, and they were warned not to meet in suspicious places, under pain of 20s. and double penance. And afterwards both man and woman confessed that matrimony had been contracted; and when they had confessed this before the judge they promised that they would, soon afterwards, cause it to be solemnized in Billingham church; and thus they were dismissed." Here we see the working of that law which gave full force of matrimony, before God and man, to the mutual promise of a boy and a girl, followed afterwards by cohabitation, without intervention of priest or witnesses. The act was ecclesiastically criminal, and therefore might be heavily punished; hence the man's temptation to deny it in this case. Yet, though the marriage was "irregularis", it was none the less binding, and these two must now regularize it. Again, in 1445, Thomas Dobynson "appeared in person, and said that he contracted matrimony with Isabella [Lame] through the following words, to wit, that he gave her a pair of gloves and a belt, on the feast of Corpus Christi last, saying to her, 'I give thee these things under this condition, that thou wilt be my spouse' [*sponsa*, which, however, need mean no more than *betrothed*]. The woman saith that she never consented to the man without her parents' consent; she saith that she took such gifts, but not under that condition." It is disappointing that we hear no more of this case. In 1451 came a *cause célèbre*, tried in the

nave of the cathedral. " John Guy, dyer, appearing in person, and examined upon oath, saith that he hath married Elizabeth Mors. Asked whether he hath any other, he saith that he hath another, Isabella Wuldwarde by name, but he is divorced from her [*sed est divorciatus ab ea*]. Asked when he married Elizabeth, he saith, some four years since. Asked at what season of the year, saith on the Sunday after Trinity, early, about the second hour of day. *Item*, who were present? the priest and the parish clerk and Elizabeth's brother, and the said contracting parties. Asked concerning the Mass, whether sung or private? he saith, private. Asked what vestments were put on, he saith that both were of blood red colour. Asked concerning this divorce between himself and his wife Isabella Wuldwarde, he saith that John Esburn doth now prosecute it and hath done so for the last four years past, but he hath not yet obtained sentence. Asked concerning the publication of banns of matrimony between himself and Elizabeth, he saith that he had this marriage solemnized without publication of banns. Elizabeth saith, upon oath, that she is wedded to John Guy. Asked concerning the season, she saith one Tuesday after the Nativity of John Baptist. Asked of the colour of the vestments, she saith that both were of blood colour. Asked of the hour, she saith early. Asked concerning those present, saith the priest and clerk and William and Thomas Mors her brothers, and the contracting parties. Asked whether John Guy had his above-mentioned wife living at this time, she saith Yes. Asked whether she herself had a husband living, she saith Yes, Robert Dolly by name. Asked where she was divorced from this Robert, she said in the church of St Augustine at Bristol, of the Black Monks; and by William Fax, commissary of the Bishop of Worcester. Asked of the publication of banns, she saith that no banns were published, but only on that day whereon they procured the solemnization of that marriage." Here, again, the record breaks off most tantalizingly. Again, in 1452, Janet Davison "sought to have William de le Toune for husband, on the plea that they contracted matrimony together in these words 'I, William, sall wed the Janet at the Kirk dore', and

she answered likewise 'William, I sall never hafe housbande bot the, William, whilles ye live'. The man denies this." At the sitting next week: "The woman demands the man; she hath failed in her proof. The judge referred the parties back to their own consciences. The man hath for his fault [for evidently a child had been born] twelve fustigations round the church with a candle [in his hand] weighing half a pound." Then, in 1453, we have "Richard Wilson and Agnes his wife. The man demands divorce, for he saith that she wished to have killed himself, William [*sic*]. The woman demanded that he should be compelled to cleave unto her and live with her, and that he should put forward whatsoever he may have against her in due form of law at the next session." This, apparently, was not done. Finally, in 1455, "Thomas Kyrkeham and Isabella his wife. The woman sought a divorce and separation from bed and board by reason of the man's cruelty [*saeviciam*]. The man denied; and afterwards, by the labour of the judge, she bent her knees and humbly begged forgiveness of her husband, and the man pardoned her whatever offence she had formerly committed; and furthermore the man sware upon the book that he will not inflict the fear of death and mutilation of limb upon the woman"—*quod non inferet mulieri metum mortis ac mutilacionem membrorum*.

We find plenty of corroborative evidence elsewhere. In 1256, a similar case came before the Archbishop of York at his manor of Cawood.<sup>30</sup> Alice Sterling "demanded one Hamon, a cobbler of Cavingham, as her husband." He had given her the effectual promise three times at least before witnesses, and they had then lived together. "The man confessed to have contracted with her at Burton *per verba de praesenti* [i.e. in the present tense, which made it binding; not merely 'I will take thee', but 'I take thee']; expressing their mutual matrimonial consent, but only on condition that the woman would pay him three marks and a half, that he might go with her to Rome." The mystery of this condition is at once solved by the succeeding sentences, in which the man pleads pre-contract on his own part with another woman

near Spalding, "in face of the Church, at All Saints Hungate, Lincoln, twenty years ago". They now hoped to patch up this matter at the Papal Court. The case was adjourned for further evidence; and, here again, the register tells us no more.

Modern society cannot afford to adopt an attitude of contempt for all these medieval difficulties. Erasmus, with ancient classical authors to back him up, pointed out that marriage, under whatever conditions, is of all contracts the most problematical and speculative. Medieval sovereigns, however, had the advantage of minimizing the ordinary human risks in this field: through their envoys they could make the most detailed and business-like enquiries. Edward II sent his trusted minister, Bishop Stapledon, the founder of Exeter College, Oxford, to inspect Philippa of Hainault as prospective wife to the future Edward III. The report survives in that bishop's register, headed: "*Inspection and Description of the Daughter of the Count of Hainault, Philippa by name.*" The document runs as follows: "The lady whom we saw has not uncomely hair, betwixt blue-black and brown. Her head is clean-shaped; her forehead high and broad, and standing somewhat forward. Her face narrows between the eyes, and the lower part of her face is still more narrow and slender than the forehead. Her eyes are blackish-brown and deep. Her nose is fairly smooth and even, save that it is somewhat broad at the tip and also flattened, yet it is no snub-nose. Her nostrils are also broad, her mouth fairly wide. Her lips somewhat full, and especially the lower lip. Her teeth which have fallen and grown again are white enough, but the rest are not so white. The lower teeth project a little beyond the upper; yet this is but little seen. Her ears and chin are comely enough. Her neck, shoulders, and all her body and lower limbs are reasonably well shapen; all her limbs are well set and unmaimed; and nought is amiss so far as a man may see. Moreover, she is brown of skin all over, and much like her father; and in all things she is pleasant enough, as it seems to us. And the damsel will be of the age of nine years on St John's day next to come, as her

mother saith. She is neither too tall nor too short for such an age; she is of fair carriage, and well taught in all that becometh her rank, and highly esteemed and well beloved of her father and mother and of all her meinie, in so far as we could inquire and learn the truth."<sup>31</sup>

Henry VII, in accordance with his well-known character, was even more cautious and business-like. His queen had died in February 1503. He thought of marrying again, and "his first thoughts were directed to the young queen of Naples, widow of Ferdinand the Second. To ascertain how far she was likely to prove a suitable match for him, he sent three gentlemen into Spain on a very confidential mission."<sup>32</sup> Their terms of reference were to pursue closely and privately a host of articles of enquiry, of which a few may be given here as specimens. "(6) *Item*, specially to mark the favour of her visage, whether she be painted or not, and whether it be fat or lean, sharp or round, and whether her countenance be cheerful and amiable, frowning or melancholy, stedfast or light, or blushing in communication. (7) *Item*, to note the clearness of her skin. . . . (9) *Item*, to note well her eyes, brows, teeth and lips. (10) *Item*, to mark well the fashion of her nose and the height and breadth of her forehead. . . . (12) *Item*, to mark her arms, whether they be great or small, long or short. (13) *Item*, to see her hands bare, and to note the fashion of them, whether the palm of her hand be thick or thin, and whether her hands be fat or lean, long or short. . . . (16) *Item*, to mark her breasts and paps, whether they be big or small. (17) *Item*, to mark whether there appear any hair about her lips or not. (18) *Item*, that they endeavour to speak with the said young queen fasting, and that she may tell unto them some matter at length, and to approach as near to her mouth as they honestly may, to the intent that they may feel the condition of her breath, whether it be sweet or not, and to mark at every time when they speak with her if they feel any savour of spices, rosewater, or musk by the breath of her mouth or not. (19) *Item*, to note the height of her stature and to inquire whether she wear any slippers, and of what height her slippers be, to the intent that they be not



deceived in the very height and stature of her; and if they may come to the sight of her slippers, then to note the fashion of her foot. (20) *Item*, to inquire whether she have any sickness of her nativity, deformity or blemish in her body, and what that should be, or whether she has been commonly in health or sometimes sick and sometimes whole, and to know the specialities of such diseases and sickness.\* . . . (22) *Item*, to enquire of the manner of her diet and whether she be a great feeder or drinker, and whether she useth often to eat or drink, and whether she drinketh wine or water or both. . . . (24) *Item*, the said King's servants, by the wisest ways that they can use, shall make inquisition and ensearch what land or livelihood the said young queen hath or shall have after the decease of her mother, either by the title of jointure or otherwise, in the realm of Naples, or in any other place or country; what is the yearly value thereof, and whether she shall have the same to her and heirs for ever or else during her life only, and to know the specialities of the title and value thereof in every behalf as near as they can." Henry's ambassadors made many secret enquiries, but could get no satisfactory answer to this last all-important question. As the editor puts it (p. xlix): "The young queen appears to have had but one disqualification. She was healthy, beautiful, and well formed, but moneyless." Henry VII remained a widower. Froissart records how "it is the usage in France that any lady, daughter to any great lord, if the king should marry her, first she should be seen and viewed all naked by certain ladies thereto admitted, to know if she were proper and meet to bring forth children".<sup>33</sup>

\* On this point they secretly pumped her apothecary, and received satisfactory answers.

## 47. THE OLD AND THE NEW

In a previous chapter, describing the genesis of the Dominican school of mysticism, I did not lay sufficient stress on the extent to which it met a crying general need. This popularized religious philosophy, this "scholastic of the heart", would have shown little vitality in the convents, and certainly would not have spread as it did among the people at large, if there had not been a deep and wide craving for something more living than the current theology. Moreover, the same craving was strong among the learned classes also. Nominalism was triumphant in the schools of the later Middle Ages. The moderate realism of the Dominican Aquinas [1250] was attacked on both sides by his Franciscan successors. Duns Scotus [1280] fell into extreme realism, and William of Ockham [1320] into decided nominalism. Ockham's nominalism, in spite of repeated condemnation by Popes, was triumphant in his lifetime and for the rest of the Middle Ages: on the whole, it is more in the tenor of modern philosophy. But any decidedly nominalistic philosophy has always a materialistic tendency. "From the point of view of the modern non-metaphysical man of Science Ockham represents perfection of common-sense: 'Ockham's Philosophy is that of centuries later.' On nearly every purely logical or psychological question Ockham gives an answer which, right or wrong, might still be maintained in almost the same terms by a modern philosopher."<sup>1</sup> This, then, was the philosophy which reigned specially in England, and among the English and Teutonic students at Paris, and at all the Teutonic universities. Ockham was Luther's "dear master", and the more idealistic Scholasticism of Aquinas and Bonaventura, though finally destined to triumph again in the Church, and to become the official philosophy of Roman Catholicism, certainly held only the second place during the last two centuries before the

Reformation. Wyclif's writings (as Rashdall points out) would probably have been treated far more seriously on the Continent, but that he and his Oxford masters belonged to the then losing party in philosophy, the realists; for by that time there was a moderate realist reaction at Oxford. Therefore, since a nominalistic atmosphere is less favourable to religious fervour than a realistic; there was a growing gulf between the philosophy and the religious feeling of the later Middle Ages. We have seen how, the farther philosophy was pursued in the schools, the stronger grew the tendency to exclude the chief Christian mysteries from its domain. St Thomas first, and then still more emphatically the reactionary Ockham, had withdrawn one dogma after another from the domain of pure reason. All the main distinctive tenets of Christianity, according to the now reigning schools of thought, lay beyond the sphere of rational proof; and Duns Scotus insisted that even the immortality of the soul rested upon faith alone, or at least mainly upon faith. It will be evident how inevitably this tendency favoured the state of mind which Renan describes as "water-tight compartments in the soul". The extreme of scepticism on the one hand, with an extreme credulity on the other, can thus flourish side by side in the same mind, which finds some reason of its own for not bringing them face to face with each other. We have seen how, from the thirteenth century onwards, it had been common (though of course never really orthodox) to draw a distinction between theological and philosophical truth: a doctrine, it was said, might be philosophically true, but theologically false. When one of Wyclif's Oxford disciples supported Wyclif's attack on Transubstantiation, and said to the masters in congregation, quite publicly, that there was no idolatry like the worship of the consecrated Host, the chancellor contented himself with saying "now you are speaking as a philosopher", and passed no further censure on him.<sup>2</sup> Those, of course, were the shifts of men who seriously doubted parts of the orthodox creed, yet may not have felt justified in absolutely denying them; and who certainly had no wish to push their denial to the extreme of probable martyrdom. But some of the most orthodox minds

also made distinctions which tended almost as definitely to the separation of the philosophical and religious spheres. The more persistently men follow their ideas to the extremest logical conclusions, the more convinced do many of them become that the things which really interest us most are not to be learned from logic alone: that while, on the one hand, we must never shrink from logic, yet, on the other, some of our most inevitable and instinctive sentiments (and, what is more, our most civilized sentiments) cannot be brought directly under logical laws, at any rate in our present state of knowledge. We live even more by intuition than by logic. Therefore, in all ages, the most strictly scientific men have often consciously kept a corner of their minds free from the strict rule of logic. Roger Bacon, in his insistence upon the study of physical science and actual observation as a cornerstone of philosophy, adds that, to know God truly, we must retire more and more into our own souls. And that is the direction in which not only learned but unlearned men tended increasingly during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As in Langland's mind, so also in the minds of many other pious and thoughtful folk, every fresh shock drove living religion farther and farther inwards upon itself. Let us enumerate these shocks. First, there was the abandonment of the Crusading ideal: then the unmistakable decadence of the Papacy between Innocent III and John XXII, with the Great Pestilence of 1348-9 and its many terrible successors; and the Great Schism; and the Hundred Years' War in France; and the still more barbarous civil wars in Italy. All these contributed to prepare a great revulsion of religious feeling. It was not that the world was growing really worse; in many ways it was demonstrably better in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries than in the glorious thirteenth. But everywhere the multitude was growing in power and knowledge; and therefore, though the institutions and rulers may not have been worse, the fabric of society was more intolerable to the moral sense of thinking people. Thus, then, we get those beginnings of Dominican mysticism, when philosophers, dragged against their will from the universities to teach these

unlearned but spiritually minded people, found that the simplification of their own language forced upon their own minds a simpler and more direct mode of thought. Thus, again, in turn, these simpler thoughts, brought into contact with the hitherto inarticulate souls which had been yearning passionately for some living word to raise them out of themselves, flamed up into an intenser conviction than the debates of the schools could ever have kindled; for almost everyone of these spiritual teachers had some Egeria; some one or two disciples among the nuns from whom he learned almost more than he brought. When, therefore, school philosophy, thus simplified and inspired, began to teach that the one thing needful was for each soul to creep as closely as it could, and as directly it could, into the bosom of Eternal Love—in other words, when the logician had given place to the mystic—then this was felt to be a word of authority, very different from the words of the Scribes and Pharisees. We must not forget, however, how much of this new message was itself due to the reigning Church. Quite apart from the fact that all the leaders of this movement were loyal Churchmen, the Church itself was always there—Church organization as well as the actual fabric of parish church or cathedral—as a refuge for any soul that longed to take refuge from the turmoil of the world. And when the clergy themselves were unsympathetic, as they very often were unsympathetic to this mysticism, no less than the Anglican Establishment has been to Methodism and so many other *-isms*, then the mystic retired to a little corner of his own, a little sanctuary of his own, within the Church. We see this in Ste Catharine of Siena's case. Her family, resenting her mystical preoccupations, laid upon her the worst drudgery of the household, but were surprised to find that she kept unbroken serenity of soul. Her explanation was simple: "I make a little corner apart in my heart for the Lord Jesus." So it was with many other mystics, with the result that many of them attained an unthought-of spiritual independence; they found gradually that the Church militant itself was no longer essential to them. Thus mysticism, by

emphasizing the necessity of the soul's direct intercourse with God, makes naturally for the toleration of religious differences. He that earnestly seeks peace on one side will not willingly pick quarrels in other directions; the more a man was convinced that he himself had found God in his own way, the less was he tempted to quarrel with others who claimed to have arrived at the same goal by different paths. Dr Inge writes very truly: "Augustine and Pelagius would alike have agreed with Eckhart's common-sense declaration, *Besser ein Lebemeister als tausend Lesemeister*: 'better is one master of life than a thousand lecturers'."

On the one hand, then, mysticism made a natural outlet for aspirations which the official Church no longer satisfied, *ex officio* at any rate. And, on the other hand, it tended to sap the foundations of officialism. No doubt its origin in England is partly independent, due to the working of the same spirit everywhere; but much of the influence seems to have come to us, and especially to London and the Eastern Counties, by the ordinary trade routes, together with Rhenish wines and cloth and metal-work. On the other hand, the commercial intercourse with Germany and the Netherlands encouraged much freer speculation than we see in any of those mystics. London, the Eastern Counties and the Midlands were also the great foci of Lollardy. What thinking men with a strong religious bent, but unpledged to official religion, were saying in Chaucer's England, may be read in *Piers Plowman*. Here we have the superior "man in the street" in London, with whom even the king had to reckon ("for where the men of London are at accord and fully agreed, no man dares gainsay them"), and where the citizens, if they found black sheep among the clergy, punished them out of hand, without leaving the job to the bishop. The whole poem is penetrated with religion, and mystical religion. He does not go out of his way to quarrel with orthodoxy; but, as we have seen, he is quite sure of certain things which could scarcely be reconciled with the ordinary orthodoxy of his day.

Moreover, we have also seen how he tells us of much freer

speech than he himself used—the fashionable freethought among great folk in his day :

*At meat in their mirthēs, when minstrels be still,  
Then tell they of the Trinity a tale or twain,  
And bring forth a bold reason, and take Bernard to witness;  
Thus they drivel at their dais, the deity to know,  
And gnaw on God with the gorge, when their gut is full.  
Such motives they move, these masters in their glory,  
And maken men to misbelieve that muse much on their  
words.<sup>3</sup>*

We get extraordinarily similar evidence from Sacchetti at the same time in Florence. Equally plain-spoken is the poem on political and social questions. Piers says to the Knight :

*Misuse not thy bondman, the better mayst thou speed;  
Though he be thine underling here, well may hap in heaven  
That he will be worthier set, and with more bliss  
Than thou, but thou do better, and live as thou shouldst.<sup>4</sup>*

Again, he calls down vengeance on "brewsters and baxters, butchers and cooks"; "for these are men on this mold that most harm worken to the poor people, that piecemeal buyen : for they poison the people privily and oft". This they do with the connivance of the mayor and his serjeants : thus they bribe and grow rich by dishonest trade, and buy town property, and build great houses for themselves.<sup>5</sup> His creed inspired him with a sense of the true brotherhood of rich and poor, though he had no sympathy with the idle or unreasonable poor. He preached what in our days would be called Christian socialism :

*For all we are Christ's creatures, and of his coffers rich,  
And brethren as of one blood, beggars as well as earls.  
For on Calvary of Christ's blood Christendom gan spring  
And blood-brethren we became there, and gentlemen each  
one.<sup>6</sup>*

He feels that Christianity is in its essence a levelling creed; that Christ fought against social as well as religious prejudices; and this he expresses in his naïve way :

*The Jews, that were gentlemen, Jesus they despised,  
Both his love and his law; now are they lowē churls . . .*

*And those that became Christians through counsel of the Baptist*

*Are franklins, free men, and gentlemen with Jesus.<sup>7</sup>*

This is only what hundreds of people talked about daily in London and other busy towns. Few men wrote it down—for the best of reasons—but from all parts of Europe we get similar anticipations of theories which are not realized until modern times; or, indeed, which we are still striving to realize now. "John of Paris (d. 1306), deduces the right of taxation from the fact that private property needs the protection of the state and its tribunals, and therefore should contribute; but it may be taxed only 'in casu necessitatis' and proportionately." Philippe de Maizières, in 1376, argued that unjust taxation is a sin; the Church has a right to refuse absolution in the confessional unless the offender does penance and makes restitution; the people have a right to refuse payment and even to depose the ruler.<sup>8</sup> That, of course, is what we first enforced three centuries later, and the French not until 1789. Moreover, there are mediæval or early Renaissance pronouncements on the social question which have an even more modern ring. The Florentine Doni writes, at about the time when the Reformation was beginning in England, but under a definitely Roman Catholic government: "The rich man says 'I pay for all the services done to me'—Yes, but what do you pay with? with your own labour? No sir, [even when you pay] it is with other men's labour that you pay." The fact is, that the capitalist system is far older than it has often been represented. Already in the fifteenth century there was a great deal of sweating, and very bad sweating. Again, that agricultural crisis which was doubtless rendered more acute by the Suppression of the Monasteries had begun long before, and partly as a result of the frequent enclosures of open land which the monasteries themselves had been making for centuries before the Reformation. The citizen, who had begun by wresting his own liberties from feudal lords, soon became himself an oppressor; and (especially in Germany) there were at the end of the Middle Ages thousands of artisans who were compelled, not only by circumstances but by customary



law, to remain journeymen all their lives. In Italy the great cities oppressed the peasants more than the barons did. The poor suffered; they talked, and sometimes they mutinied, but all was of little avail. We have seen how, as early as the thirteenth century, Berthold of Regensburg pointed out that poor folk were as helpless as fish in the water, since they could not trust each other and show a united front: "None are so false as peasants are to each other."<sup>9</sup> But, if the wage-earners could not yet join to make solid collective bargains, the middle classes at least could combine; they, on their smaller scale, could hold together, and the whole story of the transition from medieval to modern times is a story of smaller corporations growing up within, and bursting by their growth, that great corporation which had inherited the hierarchical tradition of the Roman Empire and a great deal of its universality—the Church.

Here, as so often, we find that the disruptive forces had been started or fostered by the very body which they finally burst asunder. Gregory VII had called the democracy to his help against the feudalization of the Church, more especially the lower classes of Milan, who, when they had formed a definitely papal party, became known by the name of *Patarini*. Hating as they did the growing feudalism of the clergy, they therefore became his willing and devoted allies in the fight against a married priesthood which was fast becoming hereditary. Yet, a century later, these same Patarini were not only anti-clerical but anti-papal heretics, making common cause with, if not identical with, the Cathari or Albigenses of France. Again, it was the Popes who stirred all Europe to the Crusades: but all the enduring effects of the Crusades worked adversely to the Papacy. They created a spirit of world commerce which might otherwise have taken centuries to develop. The great maritime cities of Italy, from being mere ports of passage for these thousands of armed men, became emporia of Eastern wares; men found it was more profitable to trade with Saracens—even to smuggle arms to Saracens—than to fight with them. This, again, did much to break up the stagnation of populations who had until now

been almost altogether agricultural, fast bound in feudalism and iron. Not only did towns grow up rapidly, but the circulation of money increased enormously. Hitherto lords had been able to live in barbaric magnificence by travelling from manor to manor on their own estates, they and their train eating up the whole produce of the year in a few days, and then passing on to eat up the next manor. But these same lords could do nothing on a Crusade without turning their land or its produce into ready money. Thus, from about 1150 onwards, there suddenly grows up a very numerous and important class of money-changers, who presently develop into bankers. They were most numerous on the great Eastern trade routes, the South of France and Italy. Of course a banker cannot live—let alone grow rich—without taking interest. Dante shows us the usurers writhing naked on a burning soil under a rain of fire; but his sub-contemporary Benvenuto da Imola comments on this passage: "He who taketh usury goeth to hell, and he who taketh none is on the brink of bankruptcy", *vergit ad inopiam*.<sup>10</sup> A Franciscan of Dante's time complains how sadly the practice had grown even since the coming of the friars: "Those who once would not have given such men the kiss of peace [in church] are ready now to kiss their feet . . . and [the usurer] who would once have been buried with the burial of a dog, is now entombed before the High Altar."<sup>11</sup> Equally clear is the undesigned coincidence of facts; in the thirteenth century, while usury was still a despised and dangerous trade, the average rate of interest was at least 10 per cent.; in the fourteenth century it had often fallen to 7, or even 5 per cent.; and the foreign bankers had given their name to a street in London—Lombard Street. Thus, while the knight often ruined himself on the Crusades, the citizens grew fat on them; new towns sprang up, and old towns bought for themselves, or manœuvred themselves into, a position of independence. This new civil growth was a far more serious rival to the Church than the old feudal powers had been. The baron had often robbed the Church or maltreated the Churchman, but he had done this with an evil conscience, and priest or monk might

win back from the lord's deathbed even more than the Church had lost during his life. On the other hand the difference between citizens and clergy was more often one of ideal, and the clergy were not always or altogether in the right. In this matter of usury, for instance, while strict clerical theory reprobated it, vast numbers of clergy borrowed at interest, and not a few even lent at interest. We have seen how new bishops could not pay their first-fruits to the Pope without the help of bankers. In fact, the Papal Court of the later Middle Ages was the great resort of usurers; and, though it is true that medieval Popes were comparatively merciful to the Jews, yet contemporary Churchmen sometimes tell us plainly that they did this for business reasons, to the general scandal of Christendom.

Again, the clergy had too often set their faces against the growth of civic liberties. To the distinguished Churchman Guibert of Nogent, in 1120, the name of free borough, "communio", was "new and abominable"—*novum ac pessimum nomen*—it seemed positively irreligious for citizens to combine for securing control of their own money-matters, and holding their own courts of justice. Yet gradually these village communities had gained urban rights; steadily, again, they forced their way onwards; until, long before the end of the Middle Ages, they had become a real power not only in State but in Church.

This civic development deserves a place side by side with the revival of letters and the development of popular religion in any picture of the transition from medieval to modern times. Let me quote, if only to discount them heavily, the words of Mrs J. R. Green concerning the fifteenth century. "All this heritage of squalor and rough disorder, however, was no longer accepted without protest. Old abuses were brought to light and denounced. Towns were swept and garnished, stately market crosses set up, and new Guild-halls everywhere built with shops and stalls and storage rooms for the traders. A new interest was awakened in the state of streets and lanes and central squares when waggons and pack horses began to struggle through the mire with their loads on

market day. . . ."<sup>12</sup> And, again: "In Canterbury and Worcester and Nottingham and Bristol and a host of other towns we may still admire the new houses that were being raised for the traders, with their picturesque outlines and fine carved work. Waste places in the boroughs were covered with buildings and formed into new wards. On every side corporations, instinct with municipal pride, built Common Halls, set up stately crosses in the market-place such as we still see at Winchester or Marlborough, paved the streets, or provided a new water-supply for the growing population. If we count up the new gates, and quays, and bridges, and wharves, and harbours, and sluices, and aqueducts, and markets of which the town records furnish accounts, we are filled with amazement at an activity which was really stupendous."<sup>13</sup>

This, as I have said, must be heavily discounted in the light of more recent research. Mr M. M. Postan, studying microscopically the statistics of trade and industry, is convinced that there was depression and decay from the first decade of the fifteenth century, at latest, until about 1480. Dr H. E. Salter's *Medieval Oxford* corroborates this strongly.<sup>14</sup> Yet, even in days when imports and exports are going ill, there may be compensations in home trade or industries; and, again, when these are torpid, there may still be life elsewhere. The laity certainly took interest in their churches and their civic buildings; it is difficult to trace any relaxation of building activity in any generation of the fifteenth century. At Oxford and Cambridge the earliest university buildings date from this time—apart, of course, from churches and colleges. Whether the edifice were raised by public subscription, or through the munificence of some soldier fattened on the plunder of France, or of a capitalist wool-merchant, it testifies to the growing influence of the laity. Even Bishop Wykeham, one of the greatest of these builders, had made his colossal fortune as a minister of state, enriched by royal influence with a multitude of pluralities in contravention of strict Church law. Thus there was a steady, if not uniform, growth of the lay spirit as time went on. Whatever the economic set-back may have been, it did not avail to quench the natural con-

sciousness of increasing civic importance, sometimes marked by equally natural exaggerations. It was almost inevitable that this should have shown itself first in Italy, where there was so much more continuity with ancient Roman civilization, and where commerce and manufacture had risen more nearly to modern development. Here, then, we must go back to Marsilius, whose political theories for Church and State owed so much to the every-day experiences of civic life in his native Padua. This man's thought, as Lagarde points out, "developed upwards from physics to social philosophy", whereas "the theologians who follow St Thomas, on the contrary, start from theology and metaphysics and develop downwards to sociology". Thus we get theories so revolutionary that "they remind us irresistibly of the great reformers of succeeding ages: Luther, Hobbes, Descartes or Rousseau".<sup>15</sup> Marsilius boldly seizes his opponent's sword and turns it against himself. "The laity are mistaken in discussing with the clergy to argue for their own place side by side with the spirituality. The 'spirituality' is non-existent apart from the layfolk; it is in the name of spirituality that the laity should put these usurpers to flight." The people are the true rulers of the ecclesiastical as of the civil State; the Christian population inherits, for the management of its own affairs, that *majestas* which was the heritage of the Roman republic, and which the people had lent, rather than given, to the Emperors. The Pope had no divine primacy: he was, it is true, a functionary useful in many ways and sometimes almost (though nowhere absolutely) indispensable. He had, in justice, no right of inflicting pecuniary or corporal punishments, and his sentences of excommunication were by no means always ratified in heaven. From all this there followed the most pronounced Erastianism. It was most natural that Gregory XI should condemn Wyclif as a follower of the heresies of Marsilius; but it is surprising that the learned and pious Gerson, a generation later, should apparently give a testimonial to the *Defensor Pacis*, which he does not show signs of having really read. This, however, as Lagarde points out, is a testimony to the revived interest in a man who, in his

own generation, had seemed too paradoxical to attract the serious attention he merited. Now, from about 1375 onwards, "we see everywhere a revival of Marsilius's work which, thrust less brutally forward [than in 1324], seduces the most different minds and is destined to dominate the preoccupations of many 'consultants' at the Council of Constance".

According to Marsilius's theory, the State's duty was not only to tax the clergy, but to assume control of ecclesiastical endowments and of all educational establishments, and to relieve the poor out of the surplus of clerical revenues. For, beyond this, it should even fix the number of churches and priests, appoint and pay the clergy, superintend their work, and remove them if necessary. Some of these proposals were really carried out to some extent in the great cities of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Even in Chaucer's time, the citizens of London invented far more effective disciplinary methods against criminous clergy than the bishop had ever been able to enforce. At Venice, as Sacchetti tells us, the townsfolk took clerical morals even more definitely into their own hands. When Henry VII came to the throne, one of his first statutes was to recognize popular pressure for the tightening of ecclesiastical discipline and the protection of bishops against trickery exercised by such sinners as were rich and shameless enough to threaten retaliation in the law-courts.<sup>10</sup> It runs: "For the more sure and likely Reformation of Priests, Clerks, and Religious Men, culpable, or by their Demerits openly reported for incontinent living in their Bodies, contrary to their Order; It is enacted, ordained and established, by the Advice and Assent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons in the said Parliament assembled, and by Authority of the same, that it be lawful to all Archbishops and Bishops, and other Ordinaries, having Episcopal Jurisdiction, to punish and chastise Priests, Clerks and Religious Men, being within the Bounds of their Jurisdiction, as shall be convicted afore them by Examination, and other lawful Proof, requisite by the Law of the Church, of Adultery, Fornication, Incest, or any other fleshly Incontinency, by committing them to Ward and Prison, there to abide

for such time as shall be thought to their Discretions convenient for the Quality and Quantity of their Trespass; and that none of the said Archbishops, Bishops or other Ordinaries aforesaid, be thereof chargeable of, to, or upon Action of false or wrongful Imprisonment, but that they be utterly thereof discharged, in any of the cases aforesaid, by virtue of this Act." Moreover, while layfolk were glad everywhere to give liberally for the fabric and maintenance of their own parish church, if only as a matter of local pride, yet they asserted rights of their own over these churches, and over the parish finance, which sometimes surprise modern historians, and scandalize some of their readers.<sup>17</sup> This was so not only in the town, but in the villages also, during the last generations of the Middle Ages. At the same time there were frequent quarrels about tithes; and citizens grew more and more unwilling to pay the very oppressive church-dues which, from being purely voluntary, had long since assumed the binding force of immemorial custom. The power of the purse figures largely in the revolt against the Roman Court, as in the revolt against Charles I. At York, for instance, the mayor and burgesses had the appointment of nearly all the chantry-priests: in Germany this was even more general; and many German cities taxed their clergy as though they had been layfolk, in spite of papal and imperial decrees to the contrary. The great preacher Johann Geiler, in 1500, declared that the whole town council of Strassburg were in a state of mortal sin on this account; but, in spite of the respect inspired by his character and intellect, the town council stuck to their system of taxation.

Again, the fifteenth-century towns took many matters into their own hands which had hitherto been left to, or monopolized by, the clergy. In Italy, there had been town hospitals, managed by citizens and not by clergy, as early as the twelfth century; in the fifteenth century this was the rule in Italy and not uncommon everywhere in Europe. So also with the schools; they were more and more frequently founded by laymen and managed by laymen, though of course the Church

still asserted, and generally made good, her prescriptive right to control the teaching. Already in 1432, the founder of Sevenoaks Grammar School laid down the rule that the master should *not* be in Holy Orders (though he was doubtless in lower).<sup>18</sup> In 1443 a London citizen put the school he founded into the hands of the Mercers' Company, to the exclusion of clerical control. When Dean Colet founded St Paul's School (1510) he made a similar arrangement, of which Erasmus has twice recorded the significance.<sup>19</sup> "Over the revenues, and the entire management, he set neither priests, nor the bishop, nor the [cathedral] chapter, as they call it, nor noblemen; but some married citizens of established reputation. And, when asked the reason, he said that, though there was nothing certain in human affairs, he yet found the least corruption in them." "Nothing gave Colet so much anxiety as the question to whom he should entrust the management of his school. . . . And so he appointed as master of his school a married man with a large family. The government of it he entrusted to a number of his lay fellow-citizens, of whose integrity he thought he had proof, and to their successors in order. And though this provision did not by any means free him from anxiety, he said that, as human affairs then were, this course appeared to him the least hazardous." Here, again, the trustees and governors were the Mercers' Company. The founder of a charity at Nürnberg (1388) similarly insisted that it should be governed by layfolk; and the Strassburg town council in 1500 refused to admit the clergy into the town hospital as patients, or the Béguines (Sisters of Charity) as nurses.<sup>20</sup> Again, the right of asylum which churches and churchyards had enjoyed was often curtailed about this time both in Germany and in England. The monastic reforms decreed by the Council of Bâle were carried out both in France and in Northern Germany with the help of secular princes and their servants, in the teeth not only of the unwilling monks but often of their diocesan bishops also. As we have seen, the mystic was finding the priest far less necessary than he had been. And now the Bible begins to show



him, in many people's eyes, no longer as a merely negative factor, but as a positive obstacle to pure Christianity. That, however, belongs to a later chapter.

Meanwhile, the revived study of Antiquity was beginning to tell also. This came late in England; but its effects, though slow, were far reaching. The phrase "New Learning" became a shibboleth, much as "Catholic" had long been, and as "Reformation" and "Freethought" were to become later on. On one side it was a somewhat self-righteous appellation, the implications of which were strongly resented by the other side. Thus it became a party-cry, accepted conventionally by friends and foes alike, but in very different senses; on the one side a battle-slogan, on the other a term of blame or contempt.

Yet there this new learning was, a fresh thing that must be reckoned with, and that old men could ignore only at their own peril. Greece had taught John the Scot [850], one of the most original of all medieval thinkers.<sup>21</sup> But it had also brought him into suspicion with the orthodox; William of Malmesbury described John as one who, "holding his eyes fast upon the Greeks, has deflected from the path of the Latins". Four centuries later, Bishop Grosseteste of Lincoln had studied Greek; and it was his teaching which had lent to Oxford thought much of its early originality and distinction. His pupil, Roger Bacon, had cried in the wilderness for a revival of Greek studies, for lack of which the Bible itself was sometimes misunderstood, and no man knew the original texts of the New Testament or the early Fathers.<sup>22</sup> "Therefore the Church sleepeth, seeing that she doth nothing in this field, nor hath done anything for 70 years past", except Grosseteste's translations. "The negligence of the Church is marvellous; for, since the time of Pope Damasus [A.D. 384] there hath been no pope, nor any inferior pontiff, who hath been solicitous for the furtherance of the Church through translations, except the aforesaid glorious bishop." Yet Grosseteste, one of our truest saints, ended his life in vain protests against the corruption of the Roman Court, and Bacon spent most of his later life in prison. Though the

Council of Vienne (1311) decreed that Greek should be studied at the principal universities, this decree remained practically a dead letter. On the other hand, it was a pious and orthodox Prior of Canterbury Cathedral, Selling, who finally broke this spell, and became the pioneer of Greek studies on the verge of the Reformation. In 1464 he went with Hadley, a fellow-monk, to Padua, Bologna and Rome. At Bologna he studied Greek, and returned in 1467. After another very brief visit to Italy, he was made prior in 1472 and ruled with universal applause till his death in 1495. On a later journey as ambassador to Rome, he took with him his pupil Linacre, who, with his companion Grocyn, studied Greek at the Italian universities and came back to teach it at Oxford. Here, however, the mere passive neglect of so many past generations turned into active antagonism in the face of this unwelcome novelty. There were, of course, a few enlightened scholars among the clergy; and Bishop Fox of Winchester, founding Corpus Christi College at Oxford in 1517, not only discouraged Scholasticism in his statutes, but established a lectureship in Greek. Yet "in Oxford itself there was considerable opposition to the new revival of Greek scholarship. . . . Some members of the University were of opinion that Greek literature was thoroughly infected with heresy; others, who had acquired a reputation in the schools, were unwilling to apply themselves to a branch of study in which their dialectical skill would prove useless; others again regarded all innovations as dangerous. In opposition to the Grecians who pursued their studies at Corpus Christi College, a number of clerks banded themselves together under the name of Trojans. . . . The adherents of the new learning were assailed with every sort of ridicule, and openly derided in the streets. So far indeed was opposition carried that, in the spring of 1518, a priest who should have preached a Lenten sermon in one of the churches of Oxford, delivered in its stead a vehement denunciation of Greek and other polite literature, seasoned with jeers and personal allusions."<sup>23</sup> These were the men whom Tyndale, some twelve years later, described in his highly coloured style as "the old barking

curs, Duns's disciples and the draff called Scotists, the children of darkness", who "raged in every pulpit against Greek, Latin and Hebrew". St Thomas More, at the news of these discreditable quarrels, wrote a long public epistle to the Oxford authorities. He had to remind them that Scholasticism was often devoted to comparatively unimportant *quaestiones* "in a barbarous idiom"; that the New Testament had been written in Greek, and that the Council of Vienne had attempted, however vainly, to remedy the ignorance of the Latin Church in this field. "Lastly, after contrasting the conduct of the Oxonians with that of their contemporaries at Cambridge, who were contributing towards the support of a Greek teacher, he warned them that any further opposition to sound learning would alienate the favour of their Chancellor Warham, their great patron Wolsey, and their king. Erasmus states that Henry VIII himself took up the matter at the instigation of More and Pace, and that thus the noisy advocates of ignorance were put to silence."<sup>24</sup> So effectually, in fact, that in 1523 Oxford invited, and received with enthusiasm, the personal teaching of the great Spanish scholar Vives, the open and declared enemy of Scholasticism.

Yet, in this very year, More received a despairing letter from Oxford. "The University lamented that abbots had almost ceased to send their monks to the schools, nobles their sons, and beneficed clergy their relations and parishioners. The halls were falling into ruin, and the endowed colleges alone maintained a semblance of prosperity. So again, three years later, Dr London of New College mentions that sixteen halls had lately been abandoned, and that the total number of scholars residing in the different halls did not exceed one hundred and forty."<sup>25</sup> This may well be exaggerated; and certainly it was partly due to severe visitations of the Sweating Sickness; but we must read the words also in the light of similar evidence from Cambridge. St John Fisher, preaching there as chancellor before Henry VII, had said: "Somehow, I know not how, whether it were the continual strifes with the townsmen . . . or the long abiding of the fever, that . . . carried off many of our learned men—or that there were few

or no helpers and patrons of letters—whatever were the true causes, doubtless there had stolen over wellnigh all of us a weariness of learning and of study, so that not a few did take counsel in their own minds how they might [get away from the University].”<sup>26</sup> Yet Cambridge was not outwardly unprosperous; she had her new colleges, and, in spite of her great numerical inferiority to Oxford, she owned nine out of the twenty bishops in the country in 1500. Within the next few years, Fisher himself became the practical founder of two new colleges, Christ’s and St John’s, where, by statute, neither Civil nor Canon Law might be studied, popular as those studies had been in the Middle Ages. But this innovation was not enough; and Cambridge, like Oxford, needed a new spirit still. We may apply to England the summary with which Professor Huizinga ends his *Waning of the Middle Ages* (p. 308). “The fifteenth century in France and the Netherlands is still medieval at heart. The diapason of life has not yet changed. Scholastic thought, with symbolism and strong formalism, the thoroughly dualistic conception of life and the world still dominated. The two poles of the mind continued to be Chivalry and Hierarchy. Profound pessimism spread a general gloom over life. The Gothic principle prevailed in art. But all these forms and modes were on the wane. A high and strong culture is declining, but at the same time and in the same sphere new things are being born. The tide is turning, the tone of life is about to change.”

## 48. MORE AND UTOPIA

Fisher was a noble man, laborious and learned, but greater still in character. Holbein's portraits go far to reveal both him and his fellow-martyr More. Fisher is the rugged north-countryman: his great cheekbones and the strong framework of his face proclaim a vigorous physique, while the hollow cheeks, with severe lines of mouth and chin, bespeak hard work and spare diet and self-control: there are patience and suffering in his eyebrows. He was a great man, and progressive; but the new spirit came too late into his life, and he remained thoroughly medieval to the last. The real Renaissance came first to London and Oxford with Colet and More; London counts here, perhaps, as definitely as Oxford itself. It passed on to Cambridge, not long after, with Erasmus and Croke. Though Linacre, and then Grocyn, had brought Greek to Oxford from 1484 onwards, yet their influence was limited, and might well have died out with them. But presently another Oxford man, John Colet, caught their enthusiasm, went himself to Italy, and came back with the resolution of putting his new learning to a deeper purpose. In 1496 he began lecturing publicly on St Paul's epistles. Here was a double innovation. First, it was irregular for a mere Master of Arts to lecture upon theology: such a trespass, indeed, had been the adventure which had brought Abailard into one of his worst troubles. Secondly, it was quite new for anyone to lecture on the Bible from the critical and historical point of view. In the Middle Ages, it had gradually become the accepted convention that every verse of the Scriptures had four senses, of which the allegorical was the highest, and the literal the lowest. Yet here was a Master of Arts undertaking to treat the sacred text historically, and to explain, as best he could, exactly what St Paul himself had been thinking of when he said this or that. But our Master of Arts, here, was

a man of uncompromising earnestness and straightforwardness. Erasmus, who knew many scholars, and measured them all with a very sure eye, wrote of Colet that he was one who said what he meant, and meant what he said.

This man, then, was the only surviving son of a rich London merchant who had been Lord Mayor; and, having learned what Oxford and Italy could teach him, he now determined to devote his life and energies to the Church. His lectures combined a high measure of scientific accuracy with unusual warmth of conviction; in any case they would have marked an epoch in Oxford history. But Colet's appearance on the university stage gained double force from the action and reaction between himself and another Londoner, twelve years his junior, Thomas More. More's father had been a London judge when Colet's father was Lord Mayor, and the two men must have known each other from early days. More was a precocious student; he went up to Oxford at fifteen, and gradually found such an absorbing interest in Greek scholarship that his father's stern orthodoxy and strict sense of business were shocked; he took this brilliant scholar away from the University and sent him to pursue purely legal studies at Lincoln's Inn. Thus, More just missed Colet's lectures at Oxford; but two years later (1498) we find a strong intimacy already between him and Erasmus and Colet; Erasmus, a man of Colet's age, having come to England to seek his fortune, and to Oxford for the sake of learning Greek.

Next year we find Erasmus writing enthusiastically of the Oxford group: "When I listen to my friend Colet it seems to me like listening to Plato himself. In Grocyn, who does not admire the wide range of his knowledge? What could be more deep, searching and refined than the judgment of Linacre? When ever did Nature mould a character more gentle, endearing, and happy than Thomas More's?" But Erasmus, though well enough paid for a mere scholar of that century, was delicate in health, with the fastidious taste natural to such a mind and body. Finding neither in Oxford nor in London the pecuniary independence that he sought, after less than two years he moved to Paris (January 1500). Five years

later, he came back to England for a few months; this time not to Oxford, but to London, where Colet and Grocyn and More were. By this time (1505) Colet had become Dean of St Paul's. About four years later again, Erasmus returned, and wrote his *Praise of Folly* in More's house in Bucklersbury. Henry VIII had just come to the throne; scholars welcomed him as a youth of real learning and love for learned men. Erasmus, meanwhile, had acquired a good deal more Greek by his own exertions; in October 1511 he came to Cambridge to teach the language, and was soon made Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity. He had chosen Cambridge rather than Oxford, partly because all his old Oxford friends had now gone down or were dead, but mainly because of the bitter opposition there to the new Greek. Clement V, at the Council of Vienne (1311) had decreed the foundation of a Greek professorship at four of the main European universities: yet even the fundamental intention here was in the interests not of theologico-philosophic science but of missionary work in the East; and the slight traces of such professorships had disappeared before the Renaissance, so that Greek was still regarded with suspicion by the orthodox. At Cambridge the conservative opposition never went so far as at Oxford; as we have seen, even those who did not learn Greek themselves, contributed to the salary of Erasmus who taught it. Yet Erasmus's Greek class disappointed his expectations; the lectures of Richard Croke, a few years later, were far more immediately productive than his. But it was mostly at Cambridge that Erasmus wrote two of his greatest works—his edition of St Jerome's collected writings and his New Testament. Moreover, we must remember that his influence in conversation must have been enormous; quite apart from anything he published. He was the great stylist of his day; the great satirist, side by side with the great humorists of that age, Rabelais and St Thomas More. Rabelais, however, deliberately disguised his deeper purpose under scurrility and buffoonery. Erasmus, on the other hand, was a reformer rather after Voltaire's pattern; keen to dissect, biting in his criticism, but with little constructive power. His treatise on War is a

splendid piece of rhetoric; but it shows no recognition of the deeper causes underlying war, or the real root of the evil. The constructive power was shown by More, this hard-working lawyer, judge, and statesman, who wrote, not as a man of letters, but because his heart was full, and because he seemed to see some chance of mending the world, if only by a few degrees. By far the highest product of all those free and familiar talks among that English group of reformers was not Erasmus's *Colloquies* or his *Praise of Folly*, brilliant as they are, but More's *Utopia*.<sup>1</sup>

In considering this book, we may begin with two subjects of greatest actuality at the present moment—*War* and *Tolerance*. More, like Colet and Erasmus and the large majority of scholars of every generation, was far more of a pacifist than a militarist. But he was very far from a non-resister. While the Utopians can do without money, their neighbours cannot; therefore, though this model republic has little temptation to create wars of aggression, the commonest prudence dictates that it should be prepared to defend itself against the aggression of others. Its ideal is that which Pascal has put into a single pregnant sentence: a world in which force is just, and justice has force at its disposal. More, therefore, devotes a whole chapter to the Utopian military system.<sup>2</sup> Their wars are never aggressive, with one exception to be noted later. "They never go to battle, but either in the defence of their own country, or to drive out of their friends' land the enemies that have invaded it, or by their power to deliver from the yoke and bondage of tyranny some people that be herewith oppressed." Yet they carefully avoid the extreme of supposing that we can defend ourselves against foreign aggression by merely sitting down and thinking of war as an impossible thing; or merely denouncing it as an anachronistic barbarism. The Utopians, then, do everything they can to avoid it on the one hand; but, on the other, they take great pains to ensure that, if war be forced upon them, they themselves shall emerge not as conquered people, but as conquerors. Most of their fighting they do through hired soldiers, mainly from a tribe of barbarous mountaineers who are always ready to hire



themselves to the highest bidder; there More obviously alludes to the Swiss of his day. Next, as far as possible, they cast the burden upon their allies, as an equitable return for the protection and other benefits which the Utopians confer upon them. When, at last, they must throw their own citizens into the field, they take care that this shall be done in the most businesslike way possible. All able-bodied Utopian citizens are trained to arms. This is as the law provided in More's own England; for instance, only two years before *Utopia* was written, the sheriffs of Somerset and Dorset had proclaimed a levy of all men from sixteen to sixty to defend our South Coast against a threatened French invasion. In Utopia, then, as in medieval and even Elizabethan England, all men were liable for immediate service at any national emergency; and the Utopians went one step beyond England. "They do daily practise and exercise themselves in the discipline of war; and not only the men, but also the women upon certain appointed days, lest they should be found deficient in the feat of arms, if need should require." "Women that be willing to accompany their husbands in time of war be not prohibited or letted: yea, they provoke and exhort them to it with praises; and in the fields the wives do stand every one by their own husband's side. . . . It is a great reproach and dishonesty for the husband to come home without his wife, or the wife without her husband." Though all must thus be trained for war, and in case of invasion all are called out to defend their homes, yet, so far as foreign expeditions are concerned, "they thrust no man forth into war against his will". Like the modern Swiss, they have conscription and training for home defence only, and trust that this will carry them through all emergencies. Since they are a businesslike people, their national ingenuity spends itself partly on the invention of new warlike engines or new combinations in strategy and tactics. Again, they recognize as men of business that the main object of war is to end it as soon and cheaply as possible; therefore they consider it a far greater triumph to win by cunning than by bloodshed. More's emphasis upon this side of warfare is, as Dr Hans Baron has

pointed out, truly Machiavellian; these two exact contemporaries argue with equal force that there are certain circumstances in which the end is so great that it justifies almost any means.<sup>3</sup> Again, More makes one exception to their rule of merely defensive warfare. When the increase of population drives the Utopians to colonize, they send out a colony to the nearest territory they can find which is still uncultivated: here they settle down. In this new land, they admit the aboriginal inhabitants to an equality with themselves if these will consent to co-operate with them: but "if they resist and rebel, then they make war against them. For they count this the most just cause of war, when any people holdeth a piece of ground void and vacant to no good nor justifiable use, keeping others from the use and possession of it, which notwithstanding by the law of nature ought thereof to be nourished and relieved." It is interesting to note that this last thesis has the qualified support of as distinguished a modern pacifist as Bertrand (now Earl) Russell<sup>4</sup> and that the gist of the Utopian military system is in harmony with the teaching of modern socialists in all Continental countries.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the Utopians are modern enough to realize the value of non-military sanctions, when efficiently applied. If their friends are injured by any other nation, "they wreak their vengeance by abstaining from intercourse with that nation till they have made satisfaction"<sup>6</sup>—*ejus commercio gentis abstinent*.

From war let us now pass to the less ungrateful question of Tolerance. The book takes here a bold and, for its time, even an extreme, line. All religions are tolerated in Utopia, and almost all religious discussion, so long as the speaker does not urge his arguments in an offensive manner. Those who deny the existence of any other life but the present are, indeed, looked upon as less likely to be sober and dutiful citizens, and are therefore subjected to certain disabilities. "He that is thus minded is deprived of all honours, excluded from all offices, and rejected from all common administrations in the republic. And thus he is of all sorts despised, as of an unprofitable and of a base and vile nature. Howbeit they put him to no punishment, because they be persuaded that it is in

no man's power to believe what he list. . . . But they suffer him not to dispute in his opinion; but that prohibition is only against dispute among the common people; for else, apart, among the priests and men of gravity, they do not only suffer but also exhort him to dispute and argue, hoping that, at the last, his madness will give place to reason." Again, as to objectionable manners of disputation, he instances the case of a Utopian whom the Christian travellers had converted and baptized, and who at once began disputing hotly and intolerantly against the non-Christians, "calling them wicked and devilish and the children of everlasting damnation. When he had thus long reasoned the matter, they laid hold on him, accused him, and condemned him into exile, not as a despiser of religion, but as a seditious person and a raiser up of discussion among the people." Otherwise, then, all differences are tolerated, by a law which the Utopians found to be not only charitable, but congruent with political experience.<sup>7</sup> For King Utopus, the great conqueror who had subdued this island and drawn up its model constitution, "hearing that the inhabitants of the land were, before his coming thither, at continual dissension and strife among themselves for their religions; perceiving also that this common dissension (whiles every several sect took several parts in fighting for their country) was the only occasion of his conquest over them all; as soon as he had gotten the victory, first of all he made a decree, that it should be lawful for every man to favour and follow what religion he would, and that he might do the best he could to bring other to his opinion, so that he did it peaceably, gently, quietly and soberly, without hasty and contentious rebuking and inveighing against other. . . . This law did King Utopus make not only for the maintenance of peace, which he saw through continual contention and mortal hatred utterly extinguished; but also because he thought this decree should make for the furtherance of religion. Whereof he durst define and determine nothing unadvisedly, as doubting whether God, desiring manifold and diverse sorts of honour, would inspire sundry men with sundry kinds of religion. And this surely he thought a very unmeet and foolish thing, and a

point of arrogant presumption, to compel all other by violence and threatenings to agree to the same that thou believest to be true. Furthermore though there be one religion which alone is true, and all other vain and superstitious, yet did he well foresee (so that the matter were handled with reason, and sober modesty) that the truth, of [its] own power, would at the last issue out and come to light. But if contention and debate in that behalf should continually be used, as the worst men be most obstinate and stubborn, and in their evil opinion most constant; he perceived that then the best and holiest religion would be trodden underfoot and destroyed by most vain superstitions, even as good corn is by thorns and weeds overgrown and choked. Therefore all this matter he left undiscussed, and gave to every man free liberty and chance to believe what he would."

It was in consonance with this that public worship should have a vague and general character:<sup>8</sup> "Nothing is heard or seen in the churches, but that which seemeth to agree indifferently with all [religious creeds]. If there be a distinct kind of sacrifice peculiar to any several sects, that they execute at home in their own houses. The public sacrifices be so ordered, that they be no derogation nor prejudice to any of the private sacrifices and religions. Therefore no image of any god is seen in the church, to the intent that it may be free for every man to conceive God, by his own religion, after what likeness and similitude he will." This diversity, however, turns no more to the detriment of dignified ceremonial or artistic beauty than it does to true personal religion. "Their churches be very gorgeous, and not only of fine and curious workmanship, but also (which in the fewness of them was necessary) very wide and large, and able to receive a great company of people. But they be all somewhat dark. Howbeit that was not done through ignorance in building, but, as they say, by the counsel of the priests. Because they thought that overmuch light doth disperse men's cogitations, whereas in dim and doubtful light they be gathered together, and more earnestly fixed upon religion and devotion. . . . They burn frankincense and other sweet savours, and light also a great

number of wax candles and tapers, not supposing this gear to be anything available to the divine nature, as neither the prayers of men. But this unhurtful and harmless kind of worship pleaseth them. And by these sweet savours and lights, and other such ceremonies, men feel themselves secretly lifted up and encouraged to devotion with more willing and fervent hearts. . . . When [the last] prayer is said they fall down to the ground again, and a little after they rise up and go to dinner. And the residue of the day they pass over in plays and exercise of chivalry." Again, the priests have immense power; their excommunication is dreaded as a most formidable weapon, and in his own person even a criminal priest is immune. This is because "they have priests of exceeding holiness, and therefore very few": thus Hythlodaye explains it to More, and thus More publishes it to an England where, as he himself admitted in the hottest of his orthodox controversial writings, one of the worst sores of society was the excessive numbers of clergy, the want of proper care in their selection and ordination, and the mean worldly shifts to which many clerics were driven, if they were to escape sheer starvation. Not only here, but throughout this great book, we may see how More had one foot in the medieval past, and the other not only in this modern world of ours, but in the world that is to be. "The remarkable thing about *Utopia*" (writes Professor Chambers, p. 125) "is the extent to which it adumbrates social and political reforms which have either been actually carried into practice, or which have come to be regarded as very practical politics. Utopia is depicted as a sternly righteous and puritanical State, where few of us would feel quite happy: yet we go on using the word 'Utopia' to signify an easy-going paradise, whose only fault is that it is too happy and ideal to be realized."

The next point of interest in the Utopian is one which we have already touched upon by anticipation—his attitude towards women. In war, he recognizes scarcely any difference between the sexes, but that of physical strength. In religion, he is equally broad-minded. The Utopians choose their priests with the utmost care: "there be but thirteen in every city."

These are treated with the greatest respect, both by law and by custom; yet "women are not excluded from the priesthood, howbeit few be chosen, and none but widows and old women". Here, again, no reader who is not familiar with medieval and Reformation-period religious literature can realize how far More is beyond his time. Occasionally, however, we find him definitely of his own time; and this lends, perhaps, all the more force to his liberality of mind in the wider fields. It is not only that he frankly recognizes the necessity of man being, in general, senior partner in marriage. This would seem a physical necessity from which it is difficult in any case to escape. For, looking only to the general rule, and apart from exceptional cases, we must treat marriage either as a strict or as a loose contract; there is no other alternative. If it be a loose contract, to be determined at will by either of the contracting parties, this gives an enormously unfair advantage to the man, who can earn his living separately far more easily than the woman. If, on the other hand, the contract be, as a general rule, indissoluble, even thus there must be a distinct understanding as to the representative and more responsible partner, in the few cases in which agreement can be obtained in no other way; and, here again, other things being equal, it is the physically stronger and more independent who will necessarily be accepted by outsiders as the representative partner, even if there be no law in the matter. More, therefore, in general assumes masculine supremacy in the family; and that in a far more definite form than thoughtful people would admit nowadays. He, who in pure literature did so much to anticipate Shakespearian drama, might well have written *The Taming of the Shrew*. For we need go no further than the great playwrights to see that More's downright "masculinism", however repugnant to modern manners, was entirely in harmony with those of medieval and Tudor and even later times. Yet, here again, it is only fair to take him at his highest level; and we may be proud that the medieval Ockham and the Renaissance writer in Europe who most definitely advocated the claims of women were both Englishmen. While Ockham went no further than

to suggest the vote for them, More would associate them equally with men, in the highest privileges of citizenship and in the citizen's heaviest burdens of citizenship, so far as this is physically possible.

We must deal more briefly with the rest of the book. Let us note, first, More's sovereign common sense all through. We must, of course, make allowance here and there for some touches which are obviously playful, added as a mere seasoning to tickle the reader's palate. We must make a little allowance, too, for passages where his main object is to satirize modern conditions: for instance, what he writes about international treaties, and again on sanitation, where numberless documentary details might be quoted to show that More's purpose is to shame the Londoners of his day out of the disorderly and insanitary conditions which too often prevailed in their city. But, if we make these allowances, and take the serious part of his book seriously, it is astonishing how well it stands the test of 400 years' experience since his day: "rich in saving common sense and (as the greatest only are) in its simplicity sublime". He insists everywhere upon the value of steady method, and the necessity of enlisting the total forces of the nation in every truly national enterprise. The Utopians are not men of genius; their secret is the secret of greatness in all ages—hard work, and an open mind. "I think verily, though it might be that we did surpass them in wit, yet in study, in travail, and in laboursome endeavour they far pass us. . . . Whereas they quickly, and almost at the first moment of meeting with it, made their own whatsoever among us hath been prudently devised, yet I suppose it would be long before we would receive anything that among these Utopians is better instituted than among us." When a work is recognized as necessary, the whole able-bodied population is at once set to it: we have "conscription of labour". "Thus, the work being divided into so great a number of workmen, was with exceeding marvellous speed dispatched": "therefore by the labour of so many [the work] is made in less time than any man [here] would believe."

Everything is methodically planned, as far as possible.

More's description of the division of the whole land into cities and administrative districts practically anticipates, by nearly three centuries, the methods by which the French Revolutionary Government brought order into the hopeless chaos of French administration under the Ancien Régime. The theme of the whole book is the terrible waste in human affairs which is created simply by muddle and want of method; and, above all, the labour that runs to waste because so many live in idleness while others drudge from dawn to dark like brute beasts: whereas, by patient application and good-will, the work might so be apportioned that none had so disgracefully little to do, and none was so inhumanly overburdened. His ideal is a six hours' work-day, and six hours of honourable leisure for the very poorest: a contented land, a land of temperate, cheerful mirth, and of natural song: a real "Merry England", not in an imaginary past, but in a predominantly new future. For More cherishes no vague sentimentality; he that will not work, neither shall he eat. He sees clearly that it is absurd to talk of a living wage for every man, unless every man is compelled to accept his duties to the State as clearly as he claims his privileges from the State. The criminal classes become bondmen in Utopia, and are set to the worst drudgery; yet not without hope of release on good behaviour: here, again, there are some modern Swiss cantons which come very nearly up to More's ideal.

The Utopians have a kind of monastic order—or rather, two sorts of men voluntarily devoting themselves to religion. The first sort live a life of celibacy and abstain from butcher's meat, according to the ideal of the strict monk of the Middle Ages. The second sort marry, and have families, and eat butcher's meat, because they think they can work better on such diet. The Utopians "count the former sect the holier" (writes More with delicate irony) "but the latter the wiser". In short, his ideal is Christian, but it is also utilitarian. Pleasure, rational pleasure, is the main aim of human life—pleasure which takes account not only of to-day but also of to-morrow, not only of ourselves but also of our neighbours. More cannot understand a whole society framed upon the



exclusively puritan ideal. For (he says) "if it be a point of humanity for man to bring health and comfort to man, and especially to mitigate and assuage the grief of others, and by taking from them the sorrow and heaviness of life, to restore them to joy, that is to say, to pleasure; why may it not then be said that nature doth provoke every man to do the same to himself? For a joyful life, that is to say, a pleasant life, is either evil (and if it be so, then thou shouldst not only help no man thereto, but rather, as much as in thee lieth, withdraw all men from it, as noisome and hurtful) or else, if thou not only mayest, but also of duty art bound to procure it to others, why not chiefly to thyself, to whom thou art bound to shew as much favour and gentleness as to others? For when nature biddeth thee to be good and gentle to others, she commandeth thee not to be cruel and ungentle to thyself. Therefore even very nature (say they) prescribeth to us a joyful life, that is to say, pleasure as the end of all our operations."<sup>9</sup> On this particular point, then, More is utilitarian, with the utilitarianism of a reasonable disciple of J. S. Mill. The reader may find for himself (for the little book is accessible in many editions) many other points in which More has anticipated the trend of the modern world. And as he shows his common sense in postulating so little for his ideal republic, demanding only what seems in theory a very moderate amount of order and regularity and self-control in human society, so also he shows equal sense in indicating clearly that even this moderate aim can be attained, if at all, only after long years and many struggles. His concluding words run: "I must needs confess and grant that many things be in the Utopian republic which, in our cities, I much rather wish for than hope after." This sentence is thoroughly characteristic of his genial and ironical satire. He had learned much in style, as well as in matter, from Plato; much of his subtle irony. In this Utopia, more than in any but the merest fragments of his hastily written English works, you see the real More—the real scholar and thinker, looking away from present-day controversies into the far future of the human race.

In all university history, this is the moment we may love

most to dwell on. We prize our universities for the constant public teaching they keep up, and also for their constant production of such books as few men can compose who do not enjoy academic leisure and opportunities. But more important, perhaps, than either of these is the quiet ferment of thought under the surface: the groups of familiar friends who from age to age, by the fireside or in the gardens, discuss freely the eternal problems of life and death, and thus bring each fresh generation one degree nearer—if only one hair's breadth nearer—to the solution of those problems. And in such free thought and discussion we always find the two distinct elements personified here by Erasmus and More. First, the negative element of mere indignation at the abuses which still exist in society, an element which finds vent in the easiest of all kinds of literature, satire, wherein we

*Compound for sins we are inclined to*

*By damning those we have no mind to.*

And, secondly, the far harder task of keeping hold on realities and preserving the sense of proportion all through our discontent: the mind of Sophocles, who "saw life steadily and saw it whole". The mind of More, too, who tried to form a clear idea in his own head of some social machinery which would really work among ordinary men such as we know them, if all that is out of date in the existing machinery could be scrapped.

In spite of very weighty modern arguments to the contrary, I cannot believe that More raises any serious question in *Utopia* which he had not seriously considered himself, at one time or another, during those first thirty-eight years of his life; nor, again, that he would not gladly have listened, at any time, to a free and fundamental discussion on any one of them, between competent and self-controlled disputants. His was no cloistered and fugitive faith; and, definitely as he may have decided in later years against one or other of the ideas or practices which seemed commendable in *Utopia*, we cannot conclude even from those convictions that he would not have admitted the matter to be fairly arguable on the opposite side. No contemporary, it seems, can be quoted who took *Utopia*

for a mere *jeu d'esprit*, or even as a preponderantly irresponsible paradox. Nor can we justly ignore More's share in that *Praise of Folly*, of the same period as *Utopia*, which contains some of Erasmus's most outspoken criticisms on Church life. We must remember, again, that against orthodox critics he defended Erasmus as his peculiarly dear friend. Nowadays, his treatment of the divorce question in *Utopia* is sometimes cited as a case where he could not possibly have been serious: yet that is because modern historians do not always realize how much more embryonic and fluid Roman doctrine was in those ages than at the present day. It was in More's lifetime that Clement VII was willing to treat with Henry VIII on the basis of legalized bigamy.

We must certainly bear in mind, what Professor Chambers insists upon with just emphasis, that the Middle Ages drew a clear distinction between the "cardinal" (or "natural") virtues and the "theological". The former were Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude; the latter, far higher, were Faith, Hope and Charity (the last word in that wider sense which included Love of God). *Utopia*, then, was written to show how far a society could advance upon the basis of the four lower virtues alone. Yet, even if we accept this distinction to the full, must not the book raise in every thoughtful mind the inevitable question: If the mere natural virtues can blossom into a State so far superior to actual Christendom in peacefulness and the ordinary decencies of life, can we then really maintain the immense superiority of the theological virtues? And, especially, was Henry VIII's England justified in treating Faith as so all-important that the blackest of all crimes is that of repudiating ecclesiastical tradition?<sup>10</sup> Professor Chambers rightly reminds us that even the State of Utopia falls definitely short of the modern ideal of toleration; so much so that, in conceivable extreme circumstances, a man might there be judicially executed for his faith. But More gives no hint that this has ever actually happened or was likely to happen; and in general religious peace Utopia contrasts as strongly with More's Europe as it does in international peace. The narrator, Hythlodæ, had five other

Christians with him. Two, it is true, died during the sojourn. But even the four did not take their missionary opportunities very seriously. In the spirit of the much-abused modern Cowper-Temple clause for teaching in schools, they preached not the distinctive doctrines of the Roman Church, but Christ's "name, teaching, morals and miracles", together with that constancy of the Christian martyrs which "has brought such populous nations into their sect"—*in suam sectam*. This teaching impressed the Utopians, and partly because it "seemed nearest to that particular opinion [*haeresis*] which is most powerful" among this people, where everybody may choose what religion he will. Therefore "no small number" were baptized. But among these travellers there was no Christian priest, and no bishop to ordain any such. Yet the Utopians (without any hint of dissent from Hythlodæ and his three fellow-Catholics) contemplated (and perhaps actually consummated) "the choice, without any bishop sent unto them, of somebody from their own number to exert the character of the priesthood", i.e. to institute a Mass-less, Transubstantiation-less Christianity! Moreover, the typical religious brawler in Utopia is the orthodox who has *trop de zèle*, and who, among this "naturally" virtuous folk, behaves as the orthodox commonly behaved in More's "theologically" virtuous England.<sup>11</sup> In the face of this, can we safely deny that More, in his earliest maturity, nourished germs, at least, of those new ideas which are incalculably more powerful than dynamite?

For, two or three years before More wrote this book (i.e. in 1513 or 1514), Machiavelli in his *Discourses on Livy* was emphasizing the immense advantage that ancient Rome had possessed in her single tolerant State religion, side by side with the disastrous political results of papal claims in Europe during the past few centuries. He, like Dubois and Marsilius, laid all the heaviest responsibility for this perpetual bloodshed on the Holy See; and More knew enough of history to realize that this was fairly common talk among the laity. Therefore, without venturing to decide how far these Utopian ideas are his own, and how far they are imputable only to the imagin-

ary narrator Ralph Hythlodaye, we must certainly face the fact that More's mere suggestion from behind such a mask was extraordinarily bold. Moreover, it is difficult to believe that a man of More's powerful imagination and knowledge of mankind can have failed to realize that *Utopia* would have considerable explosive effect. Modern Roman Catholic writers have much justification for treating the Renaissance as a more formidable enemy in the sixteenth century than the Reformation: and the younger More displays something, at least, of that spirit which Lagarde feels to have constituted the main force of Marsilius. "The true enemy [of ecclesiastical dominion] is that insidious, ardent and conquering work which sows suspicion and doubt in men's minds, and which, by means of a new, direct, and vigorous dialectic, scientifically saps the most firmly-established truths".<sup>12</sup> Everybody admits *Utopia* to be a definite satire upon Tudor England; what right, therefore, have we to suppose that More's eye was turned all this while upon State conditions alone, to the exclusion of the Church, of which he tells us so much?

But in one way More's life and death, with that of St John Fisher, is quite as significant for our social history as his writings. The execution of those two great men brought out, with a clearness which no man could then ignore, the unstable equilibrium between Church and State. Men had lived for generations in a Totalitarian Church, and now the Totalitarian State was coming into England. Rome insisted then, as she does still, that her laws, in case of conflict, must prevail over those of any State to which the faithful Churchman may happen to belong. Popes had often waged wars in virtue of these claims: Machiavelli pointed out as emphatically in More's day as Dubois and Marsilius had done a couple of centuries earlier, that the Popes had created in Europe more wars than they had prevented. Therefore, first under a sovereign like Philip the Fair in France, and then under Henry VIII in England, honest men lived always in a potentially impossible position, and might at any moment, by ill fortune, find themselves actually and irremediably fixed between the upper and the nether millstone. So it was with

More and Fisher. There was, however, this difference between them, that Fisher twice, at least, invited a foreign invasion of England, in terms which in any country and any age of history would have rendered him liable to the death-penalty as a political offender.<sup>13</sup> The full significance of such an invitation can be realized only by those who know that, when Paul III declared open war against Henry VIII, he decreed slavery as the punishment for every royalist prisoner whom the papalist invaders might capture.<sup>14</sup> More, on the other hand, seems to have abstained with marvellous tact and constancy from anything of that kind, and probably died as a pure martyr for conscience' sake, though there would be greater historical certainty if the messenger had not burned the Fisher-More correspondence, saying that "there was no better keeper than the fire".<sup>15</sup> Yet, if the wheel of fortune had happened to turn the other way, this man who was incapable of any lie of the soul might have escaped Henry's axe only to fall into papal fire. John XXII, as we have seen in Chapter XXXV, condemned as heresy the doctrine that Christ and his apostles had lived without property of any kind, of which the natural corollary was that the most perfect religion would be Christian communism. Four devoted Franciscans were burned at Marseilles in 1318, mainly on that count. To those four men the Pope had one simple answer: It is my function to interpret the Bible; I interpret it in a sense contrary to yours; therefore, recant or burn.<sup>16</sup> Let us imagine More thus confronted with John XXII. He is the most respected and in many ways most distinguished layman in the whole land; and he is immovably convinced that Christ and His apostles had been Utopian in their communism. Threats and cajolery are in vain; he will not descend to the lie of the soul. By holding out thus alone, amid an obsequious world, would he not have made John feel exactly as Henry felt, that this single conspicuous and incorruptible dissident was the one fatal obstacle to his totalitarian policy? The denial of the poverty of Christ was almost as necessary to John XXII's political position in 1318 as the denial of papal supremacy was to Henry's in 1534. More, who warned Henry

in 1513, "the Pope is a prince as you are", would have found, in 1318, that a pope might be a politician no less unscrupulous and pitiless than an English king. Admitting, as we must, the occasional truth of Caiaphas's words, "it is expedient that one man should die for the people", must we not recognize that from More's blood there sprang one precious fruit: namely, clearness of thought upon that century-old confusion between Church and State? From 1580 onwards, Roman Catholic suspects were submitted to what they nicknamed "the bloody question". This was: "In the event of a Catholic invasion, which side would the accused take, the Queen's or the Pope's?" Upon this we have the comment of Professor Meyer, in a book published with the orthodox *imprimatur*: "A faithful son of the Catholic Church could only answer: 'If the invasion was for no worldly object, but solely for the restoration of the Catholic religion, then I should take part with the invaders'—a reply which would certainly send him to the gallows. . . . When a man frankly admits, at a moment when war is imminent, that he would side with his country's foes, he cannot expect mercy."<sup>17</sup>

Yet this is an anticipation, however logical, of my last chapter.

## 49. THE FIGHT FOR THE BIBLE

It is sometimes urged, with considerable justice, that modern historians take too little notice of the religious factor in social life. Distinguished writers may even be found protesting that the differences among Christian sects interest them no more than the quarrel between Tweedledum and Tweedledee: yet these same men would never dream of ignoring racial or climatic differences. The attitude of Europe in general towards Life after Death was almost as universal in its main outlines, and almost as different from that of a great part of modern Europe, as are the heat of Africa, and the skin of an Ethiopian, in contrast with what we feel and see around us everywhere in Britain. It is irrelevant whether our own personal preference is for a tropical or temperate climate, for white skins or black; the point is that, in thinking or writing of African society, we must remember that our common human motives are at work there under, for us, most uncommon and peculiar conditions. So was it also in the Middle Ages. Within a spiritual climate very different from our own, among men hedged round by certain limitations over which modern thought bears us as easily as the aeroplane crosses the sea, the same elementary social forces were at work as to-day; and the main conflicts of thought were essentially the same. The struggle was always, at bottom, between the conservative and the progressive mind, each with those same qualities and defects which each shows at the present day. That, from beginning to end, is the main point of interest; that is eternal, under the most various manifestations of detail. That is what matters more to us than the things which our forefathers believed, or professed to believe, that they were fighting for at the moment. From that higher point of view, therefore, the Bible in history should interest the agnostic scarcely less than the most fervent believer. The



fifteenth-century fight for a free Bible was more epoch-making than the fight for free tea in Boston harbour. The forces there arrayed were those which have stood up against each other in almost every European revolution or civil war; and in the majority, perhaps, of international wars. They were the very forces which now divide one-half of Europe against the other, and which make a gulf wider and deeper than the Pacific between Japan on one side, North America and Australia on the other. In this chapter, therefore, we must try to deal with the quarrel over the Christian Scriptures from that point of view which links it with the long vista of world-history.

Miss M. Deanesly's *Lollard Bible* has cast such clear light upon the story of English vernacular versions that no considerable scholar on either side ventures nowadays to support St Thomas More's claim to have seen orthodox pre-Wyclif translations, licensed by bishops. There had been fragmentary versions of the Gospels and the Psalms into Anglo-Saxon, and the mystic Rolle had translated and commented the Psalter in the early fourteenth century: but, if indeed the whole Bible was ever translated, it can never have circulated beyond a few copies, so utterly do we lack any sure trace of the book. In England, as on the Continent, the first attempt to familiarize ordinary readers with the Scriptures was by people whom the Church condemned as heretics.

In the Greek Church, no serious difficulty of this kind has ever occurred. St John Chrysostom [370] repeatedly bids his hearers read the Bible for themselves: "Hear, I adjure you, all secular folk, get yourselves Bibles, which are medicine for the soul; or at least, if ye will do no more, get yourselves the New Testament." Elsewhere, he emphasizes Christ's command: "Christ, referring the Jews to the Scriptures, sent them not to a mere reading but to accurate examination. For He did not say [merely] *Read the Scriptures*, but *Search the Scriptures*. . . . He commands them to dig with exactitude, in order that they may find those things that lie deep." And, finally, he even insists upon the Bible as the ultimate touchstone of truth: "For, even as a safe door, so doth it shut

out heretics from entrance, setting us in safety concerning all the things which we desire, and not permitting us to go astray."<sup>1</sup> Here we have, as early as the late fourth century, what goes far to explain the different fortunes of the Eastern and Western Church in the Middle Ages. Greek never became a completely dead language in the East; thus there was no excuse for shutting up the Bible from the laity, even if that had been possible. Though New Testament Greek gradually became mainly unintelligible to the multitude when read in the liturgy, yet educated men could always get at least the rough sense of it. In the West, meanwhile, a very different social problem was created by the barbarian invasions. The two original languages, Hebrew and Greek, were almost altogether unknown; and even the Latin translations gradually became unintelligible to the laity. Moreover, during the general illiteracy of the Dark Ages, they were unintelligible to the majority of the priesthood, even if they had been actually procurable, since men were so little concerned in overcoming the difficulties of book-multiplication, that there was not one copy for each monk in the very richest and most efficient monasteries. For something like a thousand years, the average price of a Bible was at least equal to the whole yearly income of a well-to-do priest, and often much greater. Even if he had had the ability and enterprise to write out a copy for himself, the bare materials would have cost him a considerable sum. We ourselves are so accustomed to see it in a handy form that few people realize what a large book it really is. In the earlier Middle Ages it often ran to two or more folio volumes; and the common name for it was not "the Book" but "the Library": *Bibliotheca*, a term which has entrapped more than one unwary antiquary in the past. It was not till the mid-thirteenth century, after the Franciscan-Dominican revival, and in the full current of the new university book-trade, that the Paris booksellers produced those little portable Bibles, in minute writing upon delicate vellum, which became possibly almost as numerous as the copies of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, but which seldom or never show any sign of wear. It would be hard to find any copy answering

even remotely to Luther's well-thumbed Psalter, which he refused to exchange for a fine new one lest he should lose his local memory, so valuable to a working student. Many well-worn medieval volumes of other kinds have come down to us; but, in the surviving Bibles, it is hard to find any trace of wear even where we might most confidently expect it; e.g. in the Psalms or the Gospels. Moreover, there was not sufficient demand to call with compelling urgency for supply: even at Oxford, in the mid-fourteenth century, Archbishop Fitzralph complains of the difficulty of procuring "useful" Bibles.<sup>2</sup> The greatest men of the Middle Ages sometimes knew their Bible as well as modern theologians; but among the parish priests, as we have seen, scarcely one could ever have pored over the whole book as ancient cottagers might sometimes be found doing in Victorian England. Thus a natural gulf opened between the Bible and the people, deepened first by carelessness and finally by a natural, yet fatal, jealousy. In the East, Ulphilas, a Gothic bishop, hastened to provide his fellow-countrymen with nearly all the Scriptures in their own tongue; and his contemporary St Chrysostom set up a Gothic church in Constantinople, where lessons from this version were read as part of the liturgy.<sup>3</sup> But Ulphilas was an Arian; and in the West no orthodox prelate or missionary did the like for the converted barbarians. As *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* puts it: "What prevented the earliest English missionaries from translating the Scriptures into the vernacular, or what caused the loss of such immediate translations, if any were made, is hard to determine at this late date (xv, 374) Charlemagne tried here, as elsewhere, to remedy ecclesiastical remissness; he demanded that, wherever necessary, there should be an interpreter for the portion of Scripture read in church. But here, as elsewhere, he could not do for the hierarchy what they would not do for themselves; and "thus a custom which arose only through tenacity of ecclesiastical practice and clerical remissness was afterwards justified by the theory that a holy speech was seemly for the Holy Scripture. The abandonment of intelligibility was connected with the development of the Catholic service to a business of the

priests, before and for the passively interested congregation."

Thus, though the Waldensians struggled to return here to the custom of primitive Christianity, this very attempt, like the attempt to follow literally Christ's prohibition of swearing, became a proof presumptive of heresy. As a natural consequence, heretics and freethinkers were increasingly convinced that papal claims were incompatible with Scripture knowledge. Marsilius and Ockham appealed constantly and emphatically to the written word against the current traditions. Marsilius studied the sacred text "in full independence", instead of following the university routine of his day.<sup>4</sup> Tradition (he feels) has killed all familiarity with "the true and simple beginnings" of our faith: he is scandalized by those who, with the plain Gospel words before them, "believe rather in the tradition of men, whether holy or not holy, than in Christ's own plainest words".<sup>5</sup> It was equally natural, again, that Wyclif should have insisted upon the Bible as the touchstone of faith, and should have set his disciples to make that translation for which the time was now evidently ripe and over-ripe. In the next century, we find two German theologians, Goch and Wessel, treating the Bible as the main standard of Christian faith to the individual man, in much the same terms as modern Protestantism; yet Wessel, in his youth, had been a friend of Thomas à Kempis, and Goch, at least, remained essentially orthodox to the end of his life.<sup>6</sup> St Thomas More himself, in the very heat of his bitter controversy with Tyndale, admitted that the Church was here far behind the times. He acknowledged that, though Archbishop Arundel's decree of 1408 had threatened burning alive, in the last resort, for any man who should read or promulgate any translation made since Wyclif's day, yet the Church had done nothing since that date to provide a pure translation for the people. Heretics would club together to get their Tyndale's translation published, but no Catholic printer would risk his capital on a well-meaning "orthodox" edition which, after all, the bishop might condemn. He adds: "and surely how it hath happened that in all this while [since 1408] God hath either not suffered, or not provided

that any good and virtuous man hath had the mind in faithful wise to translate it, and thereupon either the clergy, or at the least wise, some one Bishop to approve it, this can I nothing tell." Yet More would not allow even such an approved translation to be used by all men, but "all the copies should come whole into the Bishop's hand; which he may after his discretion and wisdom deliver unto such as he pereceiveth honest, sad and virtuous", under condition that, after the recipient's death, this copy should be returned to the bishop. Moreover, he feels that the bishop might justly allow a man to read Matthew or Mark or Luke, but forbid John; permit the Acts or Ephesians, and refuse Romans or Revelation.<sup>7</sup> It is astounding that a few modern writers, on the strength of a few scrappy quotations carefully chosen to exclude this evidence, should claim this as a policy of "the open Bible".

The facts are clearly and accurately given by Miss Deanesley. From 1080 onwards, we frequently find popes, councils, and bishops forbidding vernacular versions; nobody has yet produced a decree freely permitting them. The laity were not allowed to read even Mass-books in their own language, until shortly before the Reformation. The first orthodox Catholic who can be found explicitly recommending the faithful laity to read the Bible in their own tongue is the friar Otto of Passau in 1386. But Germany was here beyond the general European standard. In England, the numerous pre-Wycliffite manuals of devotion, while they prescribe reading for the lay-folk, never suggest English Bible reading; and only one of the writers, the celebrated Walter Hilton, recommends those who can read Latin to study the Gospels as a preliminary to meditation. Another goes out of his way to explain that the layman will get good from hearing the Latin gospel at Mass, "though thou understand it nought", just as an adder is affected by the charm pronounced over her, though she does not understand the words. About A.D. 1400, the lawfulness of an English Bible began to be seriously debated; yet there is no orthodox pre-Reformation writer who explicitly approves of it. Quite characteristic is the *Chastising of God's*

*Children*, possibly written for a nun, which says "many men reproveth to have the psalter or mattins, or the gospel in English, or the Bible, because they may not be translated into no vulgar word by the word as it standeth, without great circumlocution after the feeling of the first writers, which translated that into Latin by the Holy Ghost". In other words, not only was the Bible itself so inspired that (as we have seen in Chapter xxxii), whenever its words cannot otherwise be explained away, it must be taken as absolutely binding even on questions of history and geography and botany, but this Vulgate translation was also a separately inspired work which it would be profane, if not heretical, to touch. Indeed, that is a spirit still living at the present day; not only do we sometimes find the Vulgate quoted as an "original" authority, but there is not, even now, any English version of the Scriptures "authorized", in any strict sense, for the Roman Catholic reader.

Such an exclusive spirit, however, can scarcely have commended itself for a moment to More in his earlier uncontroversial years, and to More's friend Erasmus it was utterly repugnant: his learning, with his genius for textual criticism, led him from that side to the exact conclusion at which ordinary religious folk were beginning to aim from the opposite standpoint. We must dwell a little longer on this, since there can be few better proofs of the depth of any movement than the fact that it is supported by honest men from very different directions.

Ordinary folk (it is often pleaded nowadays) were fully satisfied in the Middle Ages with the pictures on church walls and in church windows—"The Bible of the Poor"; or, at any rate, with these pictures as supplemented by religious plays, which were occasional in the villages and periodical in the towns. This is not true: and, if it were, it would cut the ground from beneath the apologist's own feet. A man thus contented would be at a very low stage of religious development; he would correspond to the slum-dweller who finds no great quarrel with his debased surroundings. No historian will seriously dispute the reminder that "it is ab-

surd to talk as though the stock from which the people of modern Europe have sprung was not essentially healthy in mind and body".<sup>8</sup> Men were ready for more religion than they actually got. It became increasingly common to accompany the religious images with long descriptive inscriptions in the vulgar tongue, such as we still see at the back of the splendid choir-stalls at Amiens, and as John Trevisa describes in the castle chapel of Berkeley. So, again, with the miracle-plays and the liturgical dramas from which they had sprung. The *Concordia Regularis* (often attributed to St Dunstan [980] but really by St Ethelwold of Winchester [970]) speaks of the drama of *Quem Quaeritis?* as composed "for the strengthening of faith in the unlearned vulgar". In [1150] the Abbess Herrad of Landsberg says the same: this Resurrection play, and the crèche, and similar inventions were instituted "in order to strengthen the belief of the faithful and to attract the unbeliever": but now (she adds bitterly) they are mingled with buffoonery, unbecoming jokes . . . and all sorts of disorder". Her contemporary Gerhoh of Reichersberg echoes this lament: these plays in the churches, so far from furthering the cause of Christ, degenerate into "vanities and false insanities", and make rather for the cause of Antichrist. In 1244 Bishop Grosseteste wrote "the clergy [of our diocese], as I hear, makes plays which they call Miracles", and directed his archdeacons to "exterminate these altogether, in so far as it is in your power".<sup>9</sup> Robert Manning of Bourn [1300], like Ethelwold and Herrad, regarded these plays as essentially instructive:

*To make men be in belief of God,  
That He rose in flesh and blood . . .  
To make men to believe steadfastly  
That God was born of Virgin Marie,*

so long as the performing clergy do not bedizen themselves in masks, or play in the churchyards.<sup>10</sup> But, from about 1370, a sermon has survived which condemns miracle-plays altogether.<sup>11</sup> "Sithen it is against the behests of God, that biddeth that thou shalt not take God's name in vain, it is against our belief; and so it may not give occasion of turning men to the

belief but of perverting; and therefore many men weenen that there is no Hell of everlasting pains, but that God doth but threaten us and not do it indeed, as by playing of miracles in sign and not in deed." And a little later (1431) we have documentary evidence from the York archives which is above all suspicion of partisanship. The masons' gild appealed to the city council for a change. "They murmured among themselves concerning their own pageant on Corpus Christi Day, when Fergus was scourged, seeing that the matter of that pageant is not contained in Holy Scripture, and it caused rather laughter and clamour than devotion, and sometimes quarrels, contentions and fights proceeded therefrom among the people."<sup>12</sup> The council therefore granted them the play of Herod instead: but later (apparently about 1470) the apocryphal play was taken up by the linen-weavers. All this evidence is quite apart from the frequent official condemnation of the Feast of Fools, and similar plays which had ceased to wear even the pretence of an edifying religious garb.

Beneath and behind these popular dramas, however, there was a true and deep current of religious literature, partly in verse but far more considerable in prose. The full significance of this was never realized until Professor R. W. Chambers's recent essay on *The Continuity of English Prose*. No sketch of the later medieval generations, however brief, can afford to neglect this, and no reader can rise from Professor Chambers's book without feeling the better and wiser for it. We see there how neither the priest nor the prophet were lacking in any generation; we find parish clergy and cloistered clergy side by side with definitely unsacerdotal mystics like Rolle and women like Juliana of Norwich. One addition only we may be prompted to make for ourselves. The essayist not only omits full consideration of the extent to which these orthodox writers must have been stimulated to compete for popular favour against those Lollard tracts which persecution and censorship have destroyed, but he hardly does full justice to the minority of such tracts which have come down to us. In especial, that long apologia of William Thorpe in 1407 may bear comparison with the best of orthodox writers, even with



More himself, for both matter and style.<sup>13</sup> Thus, both the orthodox and the heretic, each in his own fashion, testify indirectly to a great yearning among the multitude; religious folk in the fifteenth century were a Bible-hungry public.

In the opposite hemisphere, so to speak, learned men were already realizing that it was impossible to sit indefinitely upon the safety-valve. A distinguished Oxford scholar, Reginald Pecock, became bishop first of St Asaph and then of Chichester. Realizing that there was at least a show of serious reason in the Lollard objections, he undertook to meet them by rational argument. He had little difficulty in exposing one exaggeration to which they had been driven by these embargoes laid upon the Bible; he showed that, even if they could get freely at the sacred text, they would not find the royal road to truth that many hoped for through all their spiritual difficulties. But the bishop's mere appeal to reason, together with a certain tactless vanity, proved his ruin. A council at Lambeth (1457) condemned him as a heretic; nothing but public recantation at St Paul's Cross saved his body from the fire to which his books were committed. Gascoigne, the famous Oxford chancellor, wrote of Pecock with greater loathing, if possible, than of the Lollards: the Abbot of St Albans cursed him as an "impious poisoner", striving to infect the people in their faith; and commissioners reported to the king that "the damnable doctrine and pestiferous sect of Reginald Pecock exceedeth in malice all other heresies to us known by hearsay or in writing". The unhappy rationalist was condemned to solitary imprisonment in Thorney Abbey amid the fens, where he died after about three years [1460].<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile the art of printing began to work a great change, and vernacular Bibles appeared on the Continent. They were discountenanced, if not even directly forbidden, by bishops and Church synods. Not one of them contains a censor's *imprimatur*, nor was any printed at a monastic press; nor did the printer himself dare to give his name to the first four and to some of the succeeding editions.<sup>15</sup> But, long before 1500, the press had reached a development which

made Church control almost impossible; so that, before Luther's New Testament of 1522, fourteen Bibles had been printed in German and four in Dutch.

Since all these editions of that costly book were undertaken by private speculators, it is evident that the popular demand was very great: and this was presently reinforced by a man who had equal interest in scholarship and in human nature. In 1516, the year in which More published *Utopia* and a year before Luther came forward, Erasmus laid the foundation of modern New Testament scholarship in his critical edition of the Greek text, dedicated to Leo X: so great was its success among scholars that he lived to correct five more editions. In his Latin *Paraphrases* on the New Testament, dedicated to Charles V (1522), he expressed a very outspoken desire to see the Bible freed from the agelong frost in which it was still locked up from the general public.

This is a matter of such importance for our social and literary history that we must mark, before proceeding further, how far St Thomas More came towards agreement with Erasmus on this particular point; a matter too little emphasized in any book I have met with. We may read it especially in More's letter of rebuke to that young (unnamed) monk who cried *Heretic!* against Erasmus for his *New Testament* and his *Praise of Folly*.<sup>16</sup> Why (asks the monk) should this upstart presume to amend the Vulgate version, already so perfectly done by St Jerome? To this More answers that, in fact, what Jerome did was not what Jerome himself wanted, but just what he could. "His labours were ruined by these same plagues which now infest those of Erasmus, the ignorance and envy of the very men whom he had striven to benefit. It is certain that, in the edition which is now used in our churches, scarcely any vestiges of St Jerome's labours are left. . . . Do not bawl at me that the Church has for so many ages approved this translation. She reads it either because it is the best she possess or, as I think, more truly, the earliest; one which, when once it had been received and had soaked in, could not easily be exchanged even for a better one. *Approve* she never did: nor does her bare use

amount to [official] approval. On the contrary, it is notorious that there has never been any Bible-student who has learned even a little of both languages [Greek and Hebrew] and who has not found much to amend in that translator."\* More goes on to defend earnestly—we may almost say, passionately—Erasmus's right, as a scholar, to vary from the Vulgate in his translation of even a word like *λόγος*, with its immense theological importance; and he reminds his monk that nobody is competent to judge in such cases but those who have at least some serious tincture of Greek scholarship. We must not forget these words when we consider the violence with which, in 1533, More himself attacked Tyndale for departing from the Vulgate in six crucial cases, in one of which, at least, no modern Greek scholar would undertake to defend the orthodox text.† He was, it is true, less inconsistent than he has often been taken to be: yet it seems highly paradoxical

\* More here exaggerates the extent to which the Vulgate depraves St Jerome's actual text; but he does not exaggerate the extent to which Jerome was hampered by the deficiencies of pre-existing translations, already dear to the conservatives of his day. The Vulgate, of course, was first "approved" in the strictest official sense by the Council of Trent: "We decree and declare that this ancient and Vulgate edition, which hath been tried by long use for so many centuries in the Church herself, is to be held as authentic in public readings, disputations and sermons and expositions, and that no man dare or presume to reject it on any pretext whatsoever." The Vatican edition, issued by Pope Clement VIII, made it unlawful to use any other in Church, or to print any other text of the Vulgate, or even to insert various readings in the margin.

† The Greek has *μετανοείτε*—"change your minds", "repent". The Vulgate gives *poenitentiam agite*, "do penance", a distortion which has the most obvious theological significance (Matt. iii. 2). In the remaining five cases, no worse can be said of Tyndale than that he gave a comparatively non-committal word in place of one which, by long use, had acquired a sense favourable to papal pretensions. For *church* he printed *congregation*; for *priest*, *elder*; for *charity*, *love*; for *confess*, [*ac*]knowledge; for *grace*, *favour*. Erasmus himself renders *ecclesia* in seven places by the word *congregatio*, and in two others by the similar *concio*. (Tyndale's *Answer to More*, Parker Soc., 1850, pp. 13ff.) Professor Taft's preface to More's *Apology* (E.E.T.S. vol. 180, 1930) is extremely unfair to Tyndale and he is evidently ill equipped as an historian of this period, at any rate so far as religion and social life are concerned.

to represent More the chancellor or ex-chancellor as a person identical in feeling with the younger More in the days of his intimacy with Erasmus.

Let us return, then, to those Erasmian prefaces.<sup>17</sup> He can see no valid excuse for this Bible secretiveness. He notes how "none [of the Jews] was more pertinacious in their opposition to Christ, than those who had in their special possession the works in which His coming had been promised and foreshadowed. . . . Let [the accredited custodians of the Bible] have the first place as teachers; but I do not see why the unlearned should be warned off, especially from the Gospels, as profane persons are warned away from sacred things; for they were published to the unlearned as to the learned, to Greeks as to Scythians, to slaves as to freemen, to women as to men, to common folk no less than to kings. . . . Christ rebuked His disciples who forbade the access of children; for of such (He said) is the Kingdom of Heaven: let us not, therefore, drive the little ones away from the reading of the Gospels. . . . Let us consider who were the hearers of Christ himself. Were not these a promiscuous multitude, among whom were the blind and lame, beggars and publicans, centurions, artisans, women and children? Is Christ offended that such should read Him as He chose for his hearers? In my opinion the husbandman should read Him, with the smith and the mason, and even prostitutes and bawds and Turks. If Christ refused not His voice to these, neither do I refuse His books. . . . Nor should we hasten to warn the unlearned away, if it befall that one such arise who falleth into error by this occasion; for that is not the fault of reading: it is the man's fault. . . . Christ, even to-day, has His Jews, impatient that their own Moses should be cast into the shade by His light. He has His Scribes and Pharisees to lie in wait for Him. . . . Some men look upon it as impious to turn the Holy Scriptures into French or English"; yet the Evangelists turned Christ's Aramaic speech into Greek, and St Jerome gave the Church this Latin version which she treats as sacrosanct. "Why should it seem improper that each should hear the Gospel in his native and

intelligible tongue, the Frenchman in French, the English in English, the German in German, and the Indian in Indian? To me it seems more indecent—nay, rather ridiculous—that our unlearned and our women, parrot-wise, mutter their Psalms and Paternoster in Latin, not understanding their own words. I feel with St Jerome that we can more justly celebrate the glory of the Cross, and with more magnificent triumph, if it be proclaimed in every tongue by the whole human race. Let the ploughman at his plough sing from the Psalms in his own tongue. Let the weaver at his loom while away his labour with chant from the Gospels; let the steersman chant beside the tiller to which he is chained. Nay, as the housewife sits at her spinning-wheel, let her gossip or her kinswoman recite to her from the Scriptures. . . . In my judgment, it lies in great part at the priests' door when we find so many Christians so untaught that they know little more of their religion than those folk who have least pretence of Christian profession. . . . There are many of fifty years or more who know not what they vowed at baptism, who do not even dream of the meaning of the Creed or the Lord's Prayer or the Church Sacraments. This we have oftentimes discovered either from familiar speech or from secret confessions. Nay, more lamentable still, many [*plerique*] of us priests have never seriously considered within ourselves what it is to be a true Christian. . . . Who ever saw either more atrocious or more long-drawn wars between heathen folk than we have seen now for some years past among Christian nations? . . . How can we marvel that tumults should arise in the Church while Jesus is away?" (Matt. xiv. 24). Erasmus prefixed a similar plea to the later editions of his Greek Testament. Those words were addressed, if only by implication, to the Pope and the Emperor; and More in his private letters shows strong general sympathy with Erasmus's Bible labours. He could not afford, in later public controversy, to speak so plainly: yet even behind his detestation of Tyndale's theology we may read his uneasy sense that this heretic's main contentions were justified. In the third book of his *Dialogue* (ch. 16) where the adversary pleads that Bible translations are

more strictly forbidden here than on the Continent, and that "the English Bible is in so few men's hands, when so many would fain have it", he answers: "This is very truth." The innovators, he confesses, circulate their translation at great expense in money and risk of death, while no orthodox printer dares to venture his money on a counter-edition. Then, after enjoining those great precautions against misuse, of a kind that no Church whatever attempts to enforce in modern times, he confesses quite clearly that abuse is no conclusive excuse for forbidding use; that would be like cutting off one's head for fear of toothache (p. 244). After all "it might be with diligence well and truly translated by some good Catholic and well learned man, or by divers dividing the labour among them . . . and after that might the work be allowed and approved by the [bishops]".

We have a most significant sidelight here from a most unexpected source, while Erasmus and More were still alive. Alfonso de Castro, a learned Spanish friar, was made confessor to Philip and Mary, and died as bishop-elect of Compostela. In 1555, he had the courage to preach before the English court against the burning of heretics. But in 1534 he had already printed, and dedicated to Charles V, his book *Against All Heresies*, which went through many Latin editions and was translated into French. In that volume he points out the difficulty of proving to the heretic that his own interpretation of the Bible is false. "I ask, by whom is [such a man] to be taught? Not by another man; for in the case of any man he will plead that he is mistaken, and will therefore refuse to embrace his interpretation. For any man may err in faith, even though he be a pope. For it is certain that Pope Liberius was an Arian, and that Anastasius favoured the Nestorians cannot be doubted by any reader of history. . . . I do not think that there is any man so impudent in his flattery of the Pope as to attribute to him the impossibility of erring or being deceived in his interpretation of Holy Scripture. For, since it is well known that many [*plures*] of the Popes have been so illiterate as to be utterly ignorant of grammar [i.e. of ordinary Latin], how should

they be able to interpret Holy Scripture?" Two years after those words were printed, William Tyndale was burned for having given to his fellow-countrymen that which Erasmus recommended. He accompanied it, no doubt, with aggressive phrases and comments which were highly displeasing to the orthodox of his day, yet which in some cases, at least, are definitely more consonant with modern scholarship; and it is one of the tragedies of history that St Thomas More was consenting unto his death. We must not lay exaggerated stress upon the violence of Tyndale's language; for that was the habit of those times; More himself is equally violent, especially against Luther. In Utopia, the land where a man was condemned to exile for "calling his religious opponents profane, and the followers of them wicked and devilish and the children of everlasting damnation", our saintly chancellor would scarce have scaped whipping. But the very violence displayed on both sides showed that the time was over-ripe: we may remember here what the Strassburg Cathedral preacher, Johan Geiler, said in his sermon before the Emperor in More's generation: "The crash must come!"—*Es muss brechen!*

## 50. THE OPEN BIBLE<sup>1</sup>

Much of what has been written in the preceding chapter is absolutely irrelevant to the intrinsic value of that book for which men fought and were willing to give their lives. To repeat my simile of that chapter, I have tried to lay as little emphasis on the spiritual value of these Bibles as on the market value of the Boston tea-chests: to stress social politics rather than religion.

But now we must go further, in so far as this can be done without involving ourselves directly in religious controversy. The literary value of the Bible has been acknowledged by so many thinkers who would reject much of its dogmatic teaching, that no social history of England can be complete without some serious estimate of what the book has brought into English life. Let us see, then, what this *Bibliotheca* brought to the English mind; what stimulus for thought and what models of style. And let us exclude for the while, in so far as this is possible, all purely theological considerations; let us try to regard these Scriptures as though they were Mohammedan or Buddhist in their origin.

We need not speak of the four Gospels, though that would strengthen the case. Let us allow the violent supposition that the majority of seriously minded medieval folk knew, roughly at least, the main life-history and sayings of Christ as recorded by the Evangelist. Nor, again, need we consider the many simple, but striking, legends of Genesis, such as Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah's Ark and the Tower of Babel: let us again suppose that these had been fairly well known through the church walls and the miracle-play. Let us leave these, and consider only that to which the printed translations of Tyndale and Coverdale unquestionably introduced the mass of Englishmen for the first time. It is an enumeration which may make us understand why medieval scholars called this



body of scripture *Bibliotheca*, the Library; for the book is indeed a whole library in itself.

First, in the domain of historical literature. We may compare it with the greatest of all chroniclers in England, who would probably be generally admitted as greatest of all Europe, Matthew Paris. Let us take any page at random from Bohn's translation of this book, and another from Samuel, Kings, or Chronicles. As to matter, the Bible is far richer in its compression and depth of human interest, and in style the superiority is still more marked. When the learned Professor Emil Michael, S.J., published his monograph on the Italian chronicler Salimbene, one of the most remarkable of medieval stylists, he unsuspectingly selected three special illustrations of his author's striking power of expression, two of which are among the most familiar to English Bible readers: the "bear robbed of her whelps" (II Sam. xvii. 8) and "the eagle that hasteth to the prey" (Jom ix. 26). Here we have an undesigned, but very remarkable testimonial to the literary force of the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>2</sup> There could be no better lesson in style than to read at one sitting through those historical books of the Bible; from the story of Hannah, uncomforted by that, *am I not more to thee than ten sons?* and her face working as she prayed, and Eli's suspicion that she was drunken; thence, through all the vicissitudes of judges and kings and the seventy years of captivity, down to Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the Temple with sword in one hand and trowel in the other. There we have the Epic of the Race, the *Légende des Siècles* of Judaism; a story as remarkable in literature as the Jew is remarkable in history, both for his friends and for his enemies. First, the mere family: Abraham down to Joseph and his brethren. Thence the family becomes a tribe, and the tribe a nation, with its national hero in Moses. In the life of this leader the Epistle to the Hebrews traces the power of faith—forward-looking faith, as apart from mere belief in tradition—faith in the man's own future and in the destiny of his people. By faith his mother hid him; by faith he chose to cast in his lot with

his own oppressed fellow-Hebrews; by faith he forsook Egypt and faced the perils of the wilderness; and faith sustained him for the Pisgah-sight and beyond—"I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go in thither"—down to his lonely death, "no man knoweth his sepulchre unto this day", and that epitaph written on men's hearts: "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated . . . and there arose not since in Israel a prophet like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." Thence, again, we pass through the succession of judges—Jephthah and Samson and Gideon; then the kings with their flashes of glory and gloom; Elijah and Elisha and their struggle against idolatry, literally to the death: then the striking legend of Esther, and the heroism of the Maccabees in their resistance to the foreign invader. We can scarcely say even of Greece or Rome that they have so dramatic a story as this, compressed into so few pages.

As those Greek and Roman historians embroidered their narrative with oratory, so also does the Bible. Stephen's speech of defence before the accusing Jews, and Paul's before Agrippa, will bear comparison with the best of their kind in antiquity. So again with elegiac poetry: for instance, Psalms xix, xx, xxiii, cxxi, cxxvi. In idylls, the Bible is equally rich. That of David and Jonathan, crowned by David's lament, is imperishable; and Ruth is one of the world's greatest stories. First, that vow of fidelity to Naomi which is cherished traditionally even in a society which has half forgotten its origin: "The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me!" Thence to the gleaning in the field of Boaz, "in tears amid the alien corn"; and the threshing-floor by night; and that scene of suspense at the city gate; and, at the happy end, Naomi with her newborn grandchild, better (say the women) than her own flesh and blood: "for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him."

Again, we have here an oriental love-poem, the Song of Songs, sheltered under the name of Solomon. To realize its full literary excellence, we must read it as it stands, apart from

the allegorical mysticism which medieval commentators read into each verse. We have the most charming touches of nature :

*For, lo, the winter is past,  
The rain is over and gone;  
The flowers appear on the earth,  
The time of the singing-birds is come,  
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. . . .*

*Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field,  
Let us lodge in the villages,  
Let us get up early to the vineyards;  
Let us see if the vine flourish,  
Whether the tender grape appear  
And the pomegranates bud forth.*  
And accents of immortal passion :  
*Set me as a seal upon thine heart,  
As a seal upon thine arm;  
For love is strong as death;  
Jealousy is cruel as the grave. . . .  
My beloved is mine, and I am his . . . until the day break,  
and the shadows flee away.*

The book of Proverbs was deservedly popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when society was at a stage most suitable for education through pithy adages; it has been claimed as one of the main formative forces in the old-world Scottish character. We have, again, a whole literature of essays in Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom; essays not after the modern type in which Macaulay was supreme, but after that of Bacon and Montaigne. Indeed, we have one author no less sceptical than Montaigne; he who wrote the earlier part—and possibly, with a change of mind, the whole—of Ecclesiastes. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" "A man hath no pre-eminence above a beast, for all is vanity: all go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." However, so long as we desire to live, action is necessary: "il faut planter ses choux." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand;

for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Finally, "let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Whether we conclude that one author wrote all this book, or that we have here a pessimist edited by a moderate optimist, there we have it to ponder over, like Montaigne or Amiel, and far beyond either of those in the eloquence of its last two chapters.

Let us come back to that: no other book—not even Shakespeare—has had half this book's influence upon English prose and verse style. Even in satire, it is supreme; for satire can never be at its best unless it is both heartfelt and just in the main. Take, for instance, Elijah's comments on the priests of Baal, while they leapt upon the altar and cut themselves with knives (I Kings xviii. 26). Or, even better, Isaiah's words on the image-maker and image-worshipper (xliv. 14). "He taketh the cypress and the oak . . . he burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth himself, and saith 'aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!' And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth to it, and saith 'Deliver me, for thou art my god!'" Or, again, Isaiah's vision of the Babylonian despot, the persecutor, sent down at last to dree his weird in the underworld (xiv. 9). "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, 'Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!'"

There are many passages in which the simplest words attain to the height of consummate art, as in the Psalmist's "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death", or "no

man may deliver his brother, or make agreement unto God for him", or David's "would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" But Hebrew poetry is a model also for calculated and rhetorical balance of phrases, deep answering to deep. So in Isaiah (lv. 1): "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Of rhetoric in this good and original sense, as the art of conveying our thoughts in the most striking manner, there is much in the Old Testament; as, for instance, throughout the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy. Perhaps the most continuously high level is maintained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and especially where the author urges his fellows to face these startling new developments, not in the spirit of regret for a changing past but in that of faith for the future (xi-xii.). "And what shall I say more? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and of Barak and of Samson and of Jephtha; and of David also, and Samuel and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. . . . And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down

at the right hand of the throne of God." That writer had studied in the Greek schools of rhetoric; and so had St Paul, whose highest flights are loftier still. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? (as it is written, *for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans viii. 35.) Yet separate quotations, even of this length, give but little idea of the cumulative force of such chapters, consecutively read.

Even more necessary, again, is the reading of the whole Bible if we would fully realize its dramatic power. Here, it is impossible not to think of that flood of drama, unexampled in any modern country for richness and suddenness, which came in with the Elizabethans. In the Middle Ages, it was not necessary even for a Doctor of Divinity to be familiar with the whole Bible. The most living time was probably the first century of the Franciscan-Dominican revival, when the earliest Concordance was compiled, and when we find friars like Salimbene who were proud to fit every thought or word with a Scripture text. Yet even the friars drifted into conventionalism as time went on, and Chaucer's Franciscan boasts of preaching rather according to the gloss than by the simple text. As a rule, it is only outstanding men like St Bernard or Thomas à Kempis who show the text-omniscience of later Anglican and Nonconformist divines. Even to the Divinity Professor, this book was rather a collection of texts for disputation or for separate meditation: it was a nine days' wonder when Colet lectured on the whole Paul as a living author. There was only too much truth underlying Roger Bacon's exaggerated complaint that Peter Lombard's *Sentences* had displaced the actual Bible in the universities. Then, with a sudden flood, came in this great spiritual drama: that of the

human soul and its Creator: one which has no exact parallel anywhere, at least in Western literature, and to which there is no pretence of a parallel, apart from Dante's great work, between Euripides and *Hamlet*. The book is full of smaller dramas on the smallest scale, as in that psalm whose influence we have seen upon the miracle-play: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates" (xxiv. 7). Or again in three sentences of Ezekiel (xxiv. 15): "The word came unto me saying, Son of man, behold I take from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke; yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. . . . So I spake unto the people in the morning, and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded." On a far fuller scale, we have the whole book of Job, and the last twenty-five chapters of Isaiah, from "comfort ye, comfort ye my people!" to "they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord". But, above all, the whole succession of books forms one great tragedy: the human soul struggling for, and on the whole maintaining with complete success, its mystical conviction "that there is a greater unity in the universe than is recognized in ordinary experience or in science, and that the knower can be brought closer to that which is known than can be done in ordinary discursive thought". In so far as a single instance will illustrate this, we may take Habakkuk iii. 17-18; probably the very verses which inspired the most untheological poet La Fontaine with his proverbial enthusiasm for Habakkuk as a stylist. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation!" The literary value of those verses is necessarily coloured to some extent by our personal beliefs, yet it need not depend upon them; and the same may be said of the whole sequence from Adam and Eve down to the last chapters of the Apocalypse: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . . And there shall be no night

there . . . and they shall reign for ever and ever. . . . And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

This, then, is the *Bibliotheca* which, practically inaccessible to the English public before 1526, came in at that moment with a force all the more irresistible because Tyndale sealed it ten years later with his blood. We may form a faint idea of this revelation by imagining an England in which scarcely one man in ten thousand had ever read the full text of Shakespeare, from end to end, while the man who knew Lamb's *Tales* was exceptionally educated. Into such a world (we imagine) comes suddenly that whole mass of drama; and the great Shakespeare folio is set up for public reading in every parish; and the whole is now multiplied by the printing-press beyond any book before or since. For the Bible has had no rival, even the most distant, as a "best seller". Before Tyndale's martyrdom in 1536 six editions of his New Testament had been printed; partly, it is true, because the orthodox bought them up for the flames: from the aggregate of all those six editions there remain now less than a dozen perfect copies, with a few fragments. But between 1536 and 1550 at least twenty-one more editions were printed. The first complete English Bible was printed by Coverdale in 1535, and was so successful commercially that two other translations followed in 1537 and 1539. In the latter year a new edition of Coverdale's (the so-called "Great Bible") was printed and ordered to be set up in every church: six other editions followed before 1541. Nearly all of this printing was a private venture of the booksellers. It may safely be asserted that, during the half-century after Tyndale's first version, more capital was risked and greater profits were made from the Bible than from all the rest of English printed books put together. Then, at last, Erasmus's aspirations were realized, and the poorest was able to get something of this New Learning—the oldest in Christendom, and yet here, in 1538, the newest. Westcott quotes from an Anglican apologia in the year when the Great Bible was set up in our churches.<sup>3</sup> "Englishmen have now in hand, every Church and place and almost



every man, the Holy Bible and the New Testament in their mother tongue, instead of the old fabulous and fantastic books of the Table Round, Launcelot du Lac and such other, whose impure filth and vain fabulosity the light of God has abolished utterly." And he gives a concrete instance. One William Maldon told how, as soon as Henry VIII "had allowed the Bible to be set forth to be read in all churches, immediately several poor men in the town of Chelmsford in Essex, where his father lived and he was born, bought the New Testament and on Sundays sat reading it in the lower end of the Church. Many would flock about them to hear them reading, and he among the rest, being then but fifteen years old, came every Sunday to hear the glad and sweet tidings of the Gospel. But his father, observing it once, angrily fetched him away and would have him say the Latin Matins with him; which grieved him much. And, as he returned at other times to hear the Scripture read, his father still would fetch him away. This put him upon the thoughts of learning to read English that so he might read the New Testament himself. Which when he had by diligence effected, he and his father's apprentice bought the New Testament, joining their stocks together, and to conceal it laid it under the bed-straw and read it at convenient times." Such a body of literature as this, appealing to every class, could scarcely fail to revolutionize the literature of the nation. We need only go back to those two episodes which are at the high-water mark of pre-Reformation miracle-play tragedy—Isaac's speech to Abraham, and the Crucifixion scene—or, again, to the Passion as treated by a real poet in the last cantos of *Piers Plowman*. In sheer poetic force, none of these comes anywhere near to what is wrung from the half-atheist Marlowe by the last agony of Faustus:

*Oh, Faustus!*

*Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,  
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually.  
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heav'n,  
That time may cease, and midnight never come;*

*The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,  
 The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.  
 Oh, I'll leap up to heav'n!—Who pulls me down?  
 See where Christ's blood streams in the firmament:  
 One drop of blood will save me: Oh, my Christ!—  
 Rend not my heart for naming of my Christ:  
 Yet will I call on him.—Oh, spare me, Lucifer!  
 Where is it now?—'tis gone!  
 And see, a threatening arm, an angry brow—  
 Mountains and hills, come, come, and fall on me,  
 And hide me from the heavy wrath of heav'n  
 No? Then will I headlong run into the earth:  
 Gape, earth!—Oh no, it will not harbour me.*

There, the Bible has inspired both thought and diction. There is nothing quite like it in all medieval literature: not even in Dante: nor has it been surpassed in its own way since Marlowe's time. Walter Scott held that Goethe had chosen the wiser course in avoiding, at that point, any direct comparison with his predecessor of eight generations earlier. For there not only the poet, but his hearers also, were in a brave new world, provocative of individual thought. Both he and the least orthodox of them had enough belief to tremble, if no more; his "rend not my heart for naming of my Christ" was as topical in 1588 as Faust's Easter-Day confession in the Age of Enlightenment: "Die Botschaft hör' ich wohl, allein mir fehlt der Glaube."\* And, for expression, Marlowe and his hearers had now the whole religious and psychological vocabulary of the Jewish and Christian ages: the Open Bible. No finer testimonial has ever been given than that which we have from the courageous agnostic Thomas Huxley. "Consider the great historical fact that, for three centuries, this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is as familiar to noble and simple, from John-o'-Groat's House to Land's End, as Dante

\* "I do indeed hear the [Resurrection] message, but I lack the faith."

and Tasso once were to the Italians; that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of pure literary form; and finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest civilizations of the world.”<sup>4</sup>

## 51. PEASANT AND Highbrow

To understand either the Middle Ages or the Reformation, we must beware of exaggerating the fundamental unity of medieval thought and practice. The extreme violence with which Unity was proclaimed, and often enforced, did indeed achieve long and considerable success. The gospel of the uselessness of persecution is true only if we look forward to a far longer time than the vast majority of men take into their calculations. We have seen how this was as true in Piers Plowman's day as it is in ours:

*The most partie of this poeple that passeth on this erthe,  
Have thei worschip in this worlde, thei wilne no better,*

[*consideration*

*Of othe hereve than here, hold thei no tale.*<sup>1</sup>

The Totalitarian Church had, originally, corresponded very nearly to healthy and growing aspirations; it had done much to free the soul from an inferiority-complex and to help the body by bringing order into anarchy. This Roman Church had played, in her turn, the rôle which St Augustine ascribes to the Roman Empire; she had been the *παιδαγωγός*—half-nurse, half-tutor—to a new-born era. The orthodox ecclesiastical historian has a comparatively easy task for the first thousand years of history. Mr Christopher Dawson's excellent *Making of Europe* affords an admirable example of this; up to that point, even the modern agnostic is willing to go a long way with him. But it is with the revival of learning and active thought, before the eleventh century has run out, that the apologist's task becomes really difficult. From that time forward, we have increasing evidence both for learned scepticism and for popular scepticism; and, presently, for a far more serious phenomenon; namely, popular attempts to outbid the Church with the multitude, and to face her constructively with a rival body of doctrines and a rival organization.

It is idle to argue from the comparatively small public signs of Lollardy after the suppression of Oldcastle's rebellion. Even though the documentary evidence had been more scanty than it actually is, why should there have been a keener competition for public martyrdom, by the peculiarly painful death of fire, in the England of 1500, than there is for more straightforward execution in present-day Russia, Italy, or Germany?

Every revolution, in detail, is apt to become a wearisome and painful story; and critics of the Reformation have always, though not always consciously, ignored some of the most significant facts. This it is which has lent colourable plausibility to the recent fashion of explaining it away as a series of unlucky chances. This theory, stated in its most forcible and uncompromising form, seems scarcely distinguishable from naked fatalism. Whereas, from St Augustine down to Bossuet, that hammer of Protestants, the orthodox always traced the finger of God in every corner of human history, we are now told that the gravest issues for true religion may well hang, since they have erewhile hung, upon the hazard of the dice. Bossuet, encouraged by the power of Louis XIV to expect the recatholicizing of Europe through French armies, wrote in that strain to the royal pupil for whom he composed his *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle*. "Remember, your Highness, that this long chain of particular causes, which make and unmake empires, depends upon the secret orders of God's Providence. . . . It is thus that God reigns over all the nations. Let us cease to speak of Chance or Fortune; or let us speak of them only as a name to cover our ignorance. . . . It is because we do not understand the whole, that we find chance or irregularity in particular events. . . . God alone knows how to reduce all [human powers] to His own will; therefore everything is surprising if we only look at separate events; yet all advances in regular succession." Elsewhere Bossuet could write: "The whole state is in [the Prince]; the will of the whole people is contained in his will." Therefore, so long as Louis was successful, Providence evidently reigned over all human affairs. As *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* puts it in the article on Bossuet, if it were not for this witness

to God in history, then "fortune, or rather chance, would be the mistress of human affairs; the existence of humanity would be only a bad dream". Yet it is precisely this evil dream which we of to-day are invited to share. It is sufficient to quote from the most popular—and, so far as vigour of style is concerned, deservedly popular—of these modern pleas.<sup>2</sup> "The breakdown of our civilization in the sixteenth century, with its difficult saving of all that could be saved, and the loss of all the rest, was an *accident*." "The ground was prepared [for the Reformation] by a number of successive political and other accidents." "I call this the most important division of my subject, the English *Accident*. I have chosen the word with care." Covetous men, under Henry VIII, got "a sudden accidental opportunity", and the Church was wrecked. Twice, it will be seen, the author's own italics lend force to this neo-Christian worship of the Goddess Chance, which Horace had relegated to "the swine of Epicurus's sty". And it is in correction of this theory, which seems as difficult to reconcile with our actual records as with any sane conception of Divine Providence, that so much evidence must here be produced as can be compressed into two brief chapters. There is perhaps no event in history, not even the French Revolution, which more plainly displays an age-long accumulation of forces before the final bursting of the dykes—*Es muss brechen!*

The causes of this sixteenth-century Revolution may be divided roughly into four classes—moral, doctrinal, economic and political. We may begin with the moral causes, since these are most strongly emphasized by friends of the movement, and most flatly denied by its enemies. And here it will be best to start from a concrete case, sufficiently typical.<sup>3</sup>

In 1428, the Bishop of Norwich sat in solemn judgment upon Margery Backster, wife of a carpenter in the Norfolk village of Martham, where a fine perpendicular nave and tower still testify to the zeal of parishioners in that century. She was accused of having warned her neighbour to abstain from all swearing, either by God or by any saint: "and if ye do the contrary, the bee will sting your tongue and venom

your soul."\* She had invited the neighbour and her maid to "come secretly, in the night, to her chamber, and there she should hear her husband read the law of Christ unto them, which law was written in a book that her husband was wont to read to her by night, and that her husband is well learned in the Christian verity". This neighbour testified also: "The said Margery said to this deponent, that every faithful man or woman is not bound to fast in Lent, or on other days appointed for fasting by the Church; and that every man may lawfully eat flesh and all other meats upon the said days and times; and that it were better to eat the fragments left upon Thursday at night on the fasting days, than to go to the market to bring themselves in debt to buy fish." Moreover, "that Agnes Berthem, her servant, being sent to the house of the said Margery the Saturday after Ash-Wednesday, the said Margery not being within, found a brass pot standing over the fire, with a piece of bacon and oatmeal seething in it; as the said Agnes reported to this deponent". Other accusations were that she said: "You do evil to kneel or to pray to such images in the churches" since they were made by common carpenters: that she repudiated Transubstantiation, spoke of Becket as "a false traitor, and damned in hell", and cursed "pope, cardinals, archbishops and bishops, and especially the Bishop of Norwich" who had lately burned three Lollards in his diocese. These great clerics, she said, have deceived the people while they live in luxury themselves, and they have granted Indulgences which "brought the simple people to cursed idolatry". She reprobated pilgrimages, "neither to Our Lady of Walsingham, nor to any other saint or place": and holy-water and church bells. "Moreover [she said], that she should not be burned, although she were convicted of Lollardy, for that she had a charter of salvation in her body." As to William White, the priest whom the Bishop of Nor-

\* Here, as we saw in Chapter xxxv, she would have had the hearty support of great and orthodox theologians in the past. Yet Christ's prohibition had, by this time, been so forgotten or explained away that St Thomas More could condemn it off-hand as "a false heresy"—that is, as cause for burning even though the person could be found in no other fault. (*English Works*, p. 344: case of Thomas Hitton.)

wich had burned in that same year, Margery herself had followed with the crowd to see his martyrdom, "where she saw that when he would have opened his mouth to speak unto the people to instruct them, a devil (one of Bishop Caiaphas's servants) struck him on the lips and struck his mouth, that he could in no case declare the will of God".

Margery's ultimate fate is not recorded. Probably she was not burned, or we should have heard more of her; very likely, also, she owed her life to such a recantation as we ourselves might have stooped to, with the pitiless fire in sight. But the petty details of this story are no less pathetic and instructive than the tragic side of it: they show Lollardy among common folk as a very living force in human nature; one which persecution could no more stamp out, in the long run, than it was able in post-Reformation days to extinguish the embers of the Roman creed, or prevent their bursting into flame. Margery was in the current of a strong movement in her Norfolk of that day. "In the valley of the Waveney, just on the borders of the two counties [Norfolk and Suffolk], a remarkable religious movement had been going on for some time. The leaders were a small band of unbeneficed clergy, who were what we should now call the curates-in-charge of the parishes where they were living. At least nine of these parish priests were implicated.\* . . . The whole district was in a ferment of religious excitement, and priests and people seemed to be of one mind. White, driven out of Kent, found safety and welcome here [in East Anglia]."<sup>4</sup> Grasping these facts clearly, let us now see how far these obscure parish priests and these working men and women can be justified by comparison with Colet and Erasmus and More.

Margery's manners, it is true, had not that repose which stamps the class of Vere de Vere in More's *Utopia*: but neither had More's own, when he "saw red" against Tyndale and the Lutherans, nor had those of Erasmus in his argument with Luther. Sympathy with either side in this eternal con-

\* "Out of 25 heretics of whose trials we have record during these 10 years [1414-24], 11 were in Holy Orders." G. M. Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe* (1900), p. 340.



flict (for eternal it is, under different forms) must not blind us to men's equal earnestness on the other part. More, in the face of iconoclasm, felt the burning indignation of the Psalmist: "But now they break down all the carved work thereof with axes and hammers." Yet Margery, for her part, had read in her husband's book what the prophets had said about graven images: her contemptuous words about carpenter-made saints are evidently founded upon Isaiah xlv. 16; and she doubtless knew also how Josiah had earned undying glory among the kings of the True God by breaking in pieces the images, and polluting the altars and the sacred places with dead men's bones, and burning all the vessels that were made for the service of Baal, and "putting down" the idolatrous priests (II Kings xxiii. 4 ff.). We have no reason whatever to suppose that she was less sincere in her faith than the Bishop of Norwich in his; and this our later age, if it had to choose between the two beliefs, would incline rather to hers. This equality of conviction between orthodox and heretic is too often ignored by those very writers who insist most strongly on the necessity of thinking ourselves into the actual mental atmosphere of a distant age. It was ignored, with fatal results, by the More of later years in his controversies; and he was compelled to admit some real truth in Tyndale's complaint: "if our shepherds had been as well willing to feed as to shear, we had needed no such [ignorance], nor they to have burnt so many as they have." But he answers: "as for many such as have been burned, all the preaching in the world would not have holpen their obstinacy." Yet, (he adds) there is another point beside preaching upon which the prelates have been negligent: if they had burned men more strictly in the past, they would have saved society from many more autos-de-fe in the future. "There should have been more burned, by a great many, than there have been within this seven year last passed; the lack whereof, I fear me, will make more burned within this seven years next coming than else should have needed to have been burned in seven score."<sup>5</sup> Yet the earlier More, we must in reason believe, had been far more tolerant in mind. His

"undenominational religion" of Utopia gave no excuse or opportunity for the iconoclast to break images. But neither (on the other hand) could it breed sacramentalists so bigoted as to believe that they did God service by burning anyone for deliberately rejecting or defiling that outward and visible sign in which they themselves saw an inward spiritual grace. Each Utopian lived by "his own sect", and let others live. Erasmus, again, was not far removed from Margery in this matter of image-worship: in one place he points out how it was unknown to the early Christians, and, in another, how it was so exaggerated as to border on idolatry. True, these protests were "veiled in the obscurity of a learned language", and Erasmus would never have had the least sympathy with Lollard vandalism. But, rude and iconoclastic as these folk may sometimes have been, we have no excuse whatever for regarding them as mere anarchists. In an anti-Lollard poem written about Margery's time, which exults in Oldcastle's failure and ridicules his followers, "there is no mention of any design against society or property, which would certainly have been mentioned in this long satire if there had been the least ground for it".\* Later, it is true, Lollardy developed under persecution to something political and more violent. But that is a constant phenomenon in history; it is conspicuous (among other places) in that great religious and social revolution which we call Christianity. It is a weak point of all revolutions that they tempt the violent element; just as, on the other side, pacificism can never quite get rid of those who foster inertia or cowardice under the cloak of peace.

Apart, then, from that un-Utopian intolerance and bitterness, which was common to both sides, how far did the best minds agree with Margery in those days?<sup>o</sup>

As to the bishops, the anti-Lollard Gascoigne bears more damning testimony to their worldliness and tyranny than she. So, again, does Erasmus in many places. Commenting in his *New Testament* on I Peter v. 3, he writes: "*Feed* your flock, not *oppress* and *despoil* it." The early Christian bishops were fathers indeed: but "now the ruck of the bishops [*episco-*

\* Trevelyan, *l.c.* p. 370; see also the next note on that page.

*porum vulgus*] hears of nothing from its learned flatterers but 'lordships', 'dominions', 'swords', 'keys', 'powers'; hence comes the more than royal pomp of some, and their more than tyrannical ferocity".<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere, he writes even more fully and unfavourably. The pitilessness of the religious rebels is explained, though not excused, by centuries of ill-employed authority.

As to pilgrimages, we have seen in Chapter III how St Boniface spoke of their moral abuses as strongly as any Lollard, or more. So, again, one of Erasmus's wittiest and best known *Colloquies* is that in which he mocked at Walsingham, and went on to record how plainly Colet showed his disgust at being asked to worship Becket's shoe at Canterbury: "they pick out the filthiest things they can find and ask us to kiss them!"<sup>8</sup>

As to the Bible, Professor Trevelyan (pp. 342, 370) gives plain evidence "not only that the Bishop of Norwich persecuted for Bible-reading, but that the Lollards had further difficulties to contend with in searching the Scriptures". Yet on this point we have seen Erasmus's impassioned plea, and even More's regretful admissions, in Chapter XLIX.

Finally, on this question of Church fasts, which even by itself might have brought Margery Backster to the stake, Erasmus is still more trenchant and outspoken. His words are worth quoting at some length, since they cast light on English thought in general, with that insularity and that preference of compromise to strict logic which marked us already in those days. It is an exaggeration, at the very least, to suppose that our isolation from the Continent began with the Reformation. Insular was our immemorial refusal to allow torture in our law-courts, even in support of professedly religious aims, except for that momentary lapse under Edward II. On that point we stood far apart from those countries where the Inquisition reigned unchecked for three centuries; and Fortesque's *Praises of the Laws of England*, written almost in Margery Backster's time, marks such a contrast between us and France as that which is brought out between

us and Italy, to a considerable extent, by the *Italian Relation of England* in Henry VII's reign.\*

To return to Erasmus on fasting. He comes twice at least to this subject, at considerable length. It is the main theme of his *Colloquy* between *The Butcher and the Fishmonger* ('Ιχθυοπαραγία) and it fills the nine folio pages of his letter to the Bishop of Basel *Concerning the Prohibition of Flesh-eating*. In the first (*Opera*, 1703, vol. 1), the Fishmonger (who is a natural defender of the fasting laws) pleads that the Pope's laws bind all churchfolk, under pain of hell: † and that the decrees of a General Council are "an oracle from heaven, with a weight equal to the Gospels, or at least nearly so".<sup>9</sup> The Butcher reminds him that Annas and Caiaphas claimed much the same for their own laws concerning the washing of hands before meals: while, on the other hand, St Paul was careful to avoid such dogmatism, lest he should thus lay a snare for the weaker brethren. Do we really (he continues) need all these ecclesiastical by-laws? We turn the world upside down if Church privileges seem to be attacked. Yet we are blind to the far worse danger of attributing so much to human authority that we attribute too little to that of God. "If a priest lets his hair grow, or adopts lay dress, he is cast into prison and severely punished: if he drinks in a brothel or frequents a harlot, or plays at dice, or defiles other men's wives, or never touches a religious book, yet he is a pillar of the Church. I do not excuse his change of dress, but I do blame this preposterous judgment." Again: "In these days some men have been cast into prison for daring to bake on Sunday, when perchance there was lack of bread." "Soon afterwards" (he proceeds) "on a Palm Sunday, I had to go to a village hard by: the road was

\* More himself implies that England is peculiar in two ways: its extreme severity against the vernacular Bible (*English Works*, p. 224 c) and certain relaxations of fasts among the clergy (*ibid.* p. 895).

† We must bear in mind here that, in proportion as the age-long customary threats of hell grew blunt with over-repetition, fresh efforts were made (as in this edifying popular book of about Margery Backster's time) to ring fresh changes on the old tune.

encumbered by a drunken procession, worthy of the heathen Bacchus; I enquired the cause, and found that it was because wine was somewhat cheaper in that village than in town. If these [drunken] men had tasted an egg, they would have been haled off to prison like parricides; yet none punished them, none expressed his detestation for their shirking the sermon, shirking vespers, and displaying this public intemperance on so holy a day." So speaks the Butcher: and the Fishmonger answers: "You need not be so surprised at that. In the midst of cities, at cookshops hard by the church, on every holy day men drink and sing and dance and fight with such noise and tumult that neither Mass can be said nor the sermon heard. If one of those men at that time had stitched at a shoe, or if he had tasted pork on a Friday, he would risk his life." The Butcher again takes up his tale. "In England, the common folk in Lententide prepare their ordinary supper on alternate days, and no man marvels; yet if a man under dangerous fever ventured to touch chicken-broth, the thing is held worse than sacrilege. In that [English] country, in Lent, at which season the fast is as ancient and as sacred as any in Christendom, you may sup with impunity, as I have said: but, if you ventured to do the same on any Friday outside Lent, no man would suffer it. If you ask, why? then they plead the custom of their country. They abominate [*execrantur*] the man who neglects the custom of the realm; yet they pardon themselves for neglecting the custom of the whole Church." Here, and again in his later treatise, Erasmus praises the custom of Italy, where, even in Lent, veal and kid and lamb are publicly exposed in the market, "nor doth any man reprobate the buyer or eater, even though he show no sign of illness". In one respect, indeed, Erasmus would not have altogether defended Margery: "Those who eat contumaciously and seditiously are rightly punished by the civil magistrates." "But" (he adds) "whatever anyone eats in his own house for his bodily health is a matter for physicians to care for, not magistrates. If a tumult is excited, even for that cause, by the unrighteousness of some folk, let them be arraigned for sedition; but not the man who has ministered to his own

health without violating either God's law or man's." This, says Erasmus, is only one example of the extent to which human observances are put above the essentials of religion and morality. How many priests there are who would be more horrified to celebrate with an unconsecrated chalice and paten, or in ordinary daily dress, than to approach the altar reeking from last night's debauch! Again: "Man's decree forbids the reception of the bastard, the lame, the one-eyed to Holy Orders. How squeamish are we here! Yet meanwhile we receive indifferently [for ordination] the unlearned, dicers, drunkards, fighters and man-slayers. Men plead in excuse: 'Diseases of the soul are hidden from us.' I speak not of hidden things; I speak of things which are more openly evident than bodily defects." Indeed, the gist of this whole dialogue is summed up in two sentences from the Butcher: "Where, all this while, is that liberty of the spirit which the apostles promise from the Gospel? the liberty so often inculcated by St Paul, who cries: *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink?*" Again: "After all, the world is full of pharisaical folk who cannot claim holiness for themselves except by such petty observances."

Still more plain-spoken on this subject of fasting, if possible, is Erasmus's letter to the Bishop of Basel.<sup>10</sup> In this he complains: "We Christians are burdened with far more frequent fasts than even the Jews were." The result of this rule is that, while the hard-working artisan must "eat meagre" on Fridays and in Lent, the rich man may feed luxuriously on expensive fish,\* or get liberty even for meat by purchasing dispensation at Rome. If dispensation is needed, why should it not be given, without fee, by a parish priest, who knows the man's circumstances far better than the Pope can? Yet we have zealots who preach hell-fire against those who violate these artificial fasts.

Anyone who follows Dr Jortin through his collection of passages from Erasmus's most serious writings—for instance, from his notes to the New Testament and his paraphrases of

\* We have seen how Margery Backster emphasized this economic argument.

the Gospels and Epistles—must be struck to find him speaking even more plainly there than in his more popular satirical books. *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* summarizes his teaching very truly (p. 512): "He rejected the divine origin of . . . the indissolubility of marriage. . . . Fasts, pilgrimages, veneration of saints and their relics, the prayers of the Breviary, celibacy and religious orders in general, he classed among the perversities of a formalistic scholasticism. . . . In his edition of the Greek New Testament and in his Paraphrases of the same he forestalled the Protestant view of the Scriptures." Yet this Greek Testament was dedicated to Leo X; it and the Paraphrases sold by the tens of thousands, and earned the admiration of scholars from end to end of Europe. Clement VII patronized him in those later days; Adrian VI offered him a deanery and Paul III would have made him a cardinal. He wrote of kings and nobles with equal freedom; yet Charles V and George of Saxony were his steady patrons. St Thomas More, again, may almost be claimed as partner in *The Praise of Folly*; for it was written in his house, dedicated to him, and defended by him against Dorpius, Erasmus's most serious critic.<sup>11</sup> Again, More seldom showed warmer indignation or more bitter sarcasm than against the unnamed English monk who attacked the character of "Erasmus, my darling", the intimate (says More) of St John Fisher, Archbishop Warham, Colet, and the best scholars of our land; a man whose Greek Testament has been twice approved by the Pope.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the St Thomas More of later life showed in this matter, as in others of equal controversial difficulty, an "economy of truth" which detracts very seriously from the value of his defence of the Church. He has no reprobation for the substance of what Erasmus writes, but he is outraged by Tyndale's brutal insistence upon those same subjects, no longer merely in polite Latin but in English meant for the common people. So, again, when the lawyer Christopher St Germain quoted Gerson's terrible condemnation of ecclesiastical corruptions, More could not contradict this great Chancellor of Paris University; he only deprecated the translation of these things into English for general reading.<sup>13</sup> Everything tends to corroborate the

judgment of Erasmus's greatest editor, Dr P. S. Allen: "he gave utterance to what all felt, but none dared to whisper but he."<sup>14</sup> More was passionately attached to the Church; but what he felt in his heart about Church reform can generally be caught only in the "whisper" of his private letters. Therefore, we must again remind ourselves of Erasmus's most significant agreement with Margery Backster on those points of capital importance upon which she, in her poverty and her lack of powerful patrons, stood face to face with an agonizing death. The scholar, from his lofty European standpoint, saw essentially the same on these points as this obscure Norfolk villager: and, when such agreement of criticism is reached in any society, then we must lift up our heads, for revolution draweth nigh.

Other and more invidious moral questions need less elaboration in this chapter. They have often been rehearsed, but never, to my knowledge, really met in detail. Clerical morals in the England of 1500 were, on the whole, such as would be tolerated in no civilized country of to-day. A distinguished bishop, Guillaume Durand, at the Pope's request, had drawn up for the Ecumenical Council of Vienne, in 1311, a list of matters that most urgently needed reform.<sup>15</sup> He had insisted that Europe "might be reformed, if the Church of Rome would begin by removing evil examples, [first] from itself and then gradually from evil prelates and the rest; for by such evil examples men are scandalized, and the whole people as it were infected, and (as Isaiah saith) they that rule over them suffer God's name to be blasphemed for this". In some cases, the mere titles of the good bishop's chapters speak volumes; here are two of them. "Concerning the avoidance of the cohabitation of clergy and women; and against the keeping of brothels near churches, or hard by the lord Pope's palace in Rome; and that the lord Pope's marshal and other like persons should not take money from the harlots or brothel-keepers."<sup>16</sup> Again: "Concerning the incontinence of clerical persons, and whether we should ordain in the Western Church as the Eastern doth, taking no vow of chastity from those who minister at the altar, especially considering that



the Eastern custom held good in the Apostles' time." In equally plain language this learned and pious bishop condemned the abuse of Indulgences, the irreverence with which the clergy habitually walked about or conversed with their friends during divine service, and their frequent ignorance even of the very language of their service books. This, be it noted, was before the Black Death, which is so often quoted with ludicrous exaggeration in palliation of Church abuses in the sixteenth century. Yet that Council of Vienne did next to nothing in this field of reform; nor did any of the great councils which followed. We have seen what was the state of an English diocese in 1397 (Chapter XIII) and how our poets then spoke of clerical morals. Constance was the council that most seriously struggled for reform; yet nothing was there done even in the most urgent matter, that of the monasteries, comparable in historical importance to the burning of John Hus who had striven to purify the Church. A generation later than this, the great Oxford Chancellor Gascoigne agreed with the Lollards, whom he otherwise loathed, that parsons bought licences for concubinage from the hierarchy; and St Thomas More could not really deny this even in face of the hated Tyndale's accusations. Erasmus, in his treatise addressed to the Bishop of Basel, argues from this licence for sin as an incontrovertible and notorious fact.<sup>17</sup> "What swarms of priests are nourished in the monasteries! and, beyond these, the multitude of priests is innumerable; yet, among all these, how rare are those who live chastely! I speak of those who publicly keep concubines in their houses instead of wives; yet, even so, I touch not upon the mysteries of their more secret lusts: I speak only of those things which are notorious [*notissima*] even to the multitude. . . . A great proportion [*magna pars*] of the priests live in ill fame, and it is with a conscience far from serene that they handle the sacred mysteries. Hence their fruit is in great part ruined, since their disreputable life renders their doctrine contemptible [*dedecorosa*] to the people." He pleads for making celibacy optional, and adds: "I doubt not that there are many [*plerique*] bishops who see clearly that things are as I describe

them; but I fear that, here again, money is the real obstacle to our following the course we see to be best. If the bishops try to change, perhaps their officials [i.e. archdeacons and deans] will cry out against it; for these men smell more gain from the priests' concubines than they would get from their wives. It is not just that money should have such power among us that, in a matter of such moment, we should follow any but a straightforward policy." To what has been already said in an earlier chapter I must here add three unexceptionable witnesses who exactly fill in the century from Margery Backster to Erasmus.

Gascoigne, in his *Liber Veritatum*, repeats to weariness that the clergy are ruining the Church.<sup>18</sup> "Alas," he writes, "the man who nowadays undertakes the cure of souls either is very evil, or is good and perfect to no purpose. For, if he do according to the works of many of his fellows, he will be very wicked; and if he do not according to their works he will be reviled by many and despised by still more." He shows us how hard it was even for a determined bishop like Praty of Chichester to eject a notorious black sheep from his living, and how little the majority of prelates were inclined to undertake such invidious duties: "for by one bishop the love of sin has of late been fostered, since the parishioners of one rectory have said: 'Now we believed adultery and fornication to be no sin; for if it were a sin our bishop would have deprived our rector of his cure; for our bishop knows that our rector has been publicly taken in adultery with his own parishioner, the wife of another man; yet the bishop has not expelled him from his cure.'"<sup>19</sup> Moreover, even at Oxford, where he had committed several rapes, this man was afterwards admitted to the degree of Doctor of Canon Law." Some forty years later Dean Colet wrote: "O priests! O priesthood! O the detestable boldness of wicked men in this our generation! O the abominable impiety of those miserable priests, of whom this age of ours contains a great multitude, who fear not to rush from the bosom of some foul harlot into the temple of the Church, to the altar of Christ, to the mysteries of God!"<sup>20</sup> Again, only a few years before

Luther's public appearance, the same cry of despair was raised by the great prelate who was so soon to suffer death for his loyalty to the Pope: "An we take heed and call to mind" (wrote St John Fisher to the Mother of King Henry VII) "how many vices reign nowadays in Christ's Church, as well in the clergy as in the common people; how many also be unlike in their living unto such in times past, perchance we shall think that Almighty God slumbereth not only, but also that He hath slept soundly a great season."

One of More's defensive arguments ran thus, that the clergy, after all, are drawn from the laity: such as our layfolk are, such will be our clerics. A true plea, doubtless, in the main; but fatally double-edged. Lay morality, by the evidence of all our witnesses, was as low in the Middle Ages as it has ever been in post-Reformation England: here the Hereford visitation and similar official records agree with the literary sources. It was as St Bernard (with many learned and pious men after him) quoted from Isaiah: like priests, like people, *sicut sacerdos, sic populus*. Wales, Scotland and Ireland were in this respect even behind England; indeed, the Calendars of Papal Registers show an irregularity of life among the Irish clergy which would not be tolerated nowadays in any Christian land, except perhaps in Southern Italy or pre-revolutionary Spain, or the South American republics. Moreover, these things which modern apologists attempt to palliate were so notorious in their own day that more than one orthodox writer can be found uttering the clear prophecy: This cannot last: the real strength of heresy lies in the ignorance and immorality of our clergy: we must get reform or revolution.\* Yet the rapid growth of the Indulgence abuse only made things worse. Gascoigne, the Lollard-hater, wrote in words which from Luther's pen would have been accused of gross exaggeration: "Sinners say nowadays 'I care not how many or what evils I do in God's sight; for I can easily and quickly get plenary remission of all guilt and penalty whatso-

\* See *Camb. Mod. Hist.* i, 678. Another contemporary of Erasmus who insisted upon this was Gianfrancesco Pico, nephew to St Thomas More's admired hero, in a memorial addressed to Leo X.

ever [*cujusdam culpae et poenae*] by an absolution and Indulgence granted to me by the Pope, whose written grant I have bought for 4*d.* or 6*d.*, or have won as a stake for a game of tennis."<sup>21</sup>

Modern historical research is rendering it more and more difficult to believe that "the hold of the [medieval] Church was due to the fact that it could satisfy the best cravings of the whole man; his love of beauty, his desire for goodness, his endeavour after truth".<sup>22</sup> If there is any generation of the Middle Ages to which we may truly apply this praise, it is frankly inapplicable to the fifteenth century in England. The idea would seem to rest upon that equivocal which has often been pointed out in Augustine's *City of God*. Inadvertently or semi-consciously, the saint sometimes applies to the actual Church, the organized institution, the Church militant, words which are strictly true only of the Ideal Church. There were many, no doubt, who did find their ideal in the institutional Church; but there were others, not less zealous for righteousness and truth, who found it increasingly difficult to reconcile their conscience with what they saw and heard within the walls of those impressive buildings upon whose structure and furniture so much was spent in the later Middle Ages. *Dives and Pauper*, as we have seen, gave clear voice to what many men must have thought who had little sympathy with actual militant Lollardy. These men did not lack the love of beauty; some, like Milton, had a deeper sense of art than the average conservative; but such beauty could not satisfy them fully unless they saw it happily married to truth.

## 52. THE BURSTING OF THE DYKES

So much for the Moral basis of the Reformation; we must pass on now to the Doctrinal. Erasmus has told us, what a dozen great Churchmen had said before him and what human nature herself tells us, that institutions, like individuals, will in the long run find their teaching judged by their behaviour. It was the essential sanity of the English public which bred closer and closer criticism of the cleric, first in his person and then in his teaching. Christ's words do but reinforce what common sense will always suggest: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

We have seen (Chapter xxxii) how Scholasticism had always lacked one element essential to a perfect philosophy: it never applied thoroughly scientific enquiry to its own fundamental assumptions. It rested upon belief in a barbarian's hell, and in the inerrancy of a written book, and in the infallibility of the Church: and these three elements, in combination, had the devastating force of mingled sulphur, saltpetre, and charcoal. For upon these theological assumptions the Schoolmen built a strictly—one may say ferociously—logical system, which coloured the whole thought of those ages, and from which the mystic alone, by treating this logic as irrelevant and seeking his own direct way to God through other paths, could escape without necessarily losing his orthodoxy. For, within that stately scholastic framework, there were innumerable quiet corners for the meditations and the adoration of a simple soul; and few men would have quarrelled with these immemorial ecclesiastical traditions if only the teachers had, with any consistency, shown forth their faith by their works. Here, again, we may find Erasmus speaking to the Bishop of Basel with the voice, essentially, of Margery Backster.<sup>1</sup> A bishop, he argues, can secure far better obedience

by persuasion than by force or threats, or by constantly writing *We ordain; We decree; We determine; We bid; We will; We command*. A respected and paternal bishop has more power than even a king, with all his threats, can exert. "Do we not see, as soon as one arises who is commended by any opinion of sanctity, and who shows any appearance of a Gospel-preacher,\* with what enthusiasm the people hang from his lips, and what heartfelt favour they grant him? . . . If the people sees a man to be a true priest and bishop, his exhortation will not be without fruit. But if his publicly irreligious [*impia*] life, his impure morals, his gross ignorance, his insatiable greed, and his barbarous savageness have utterly alienated people's minds, how shall they profit by his precepts?" We must remember, what nobody in Margery's Norfolk could have forgotten, that Bishop Despenser had been appointed by the Pope to the see of Norwich rather for military than for theological service; that he had fought against the peasants in their great revolt of 1381, and had led a "Crusade" in 1383 against the French as supporters of the anti-pope; moreover, that the scandal had been increased for pious souls by such profusion of Indulgences granted to these "Crusaders" as had given double force to the criticisms of Wyclif and his followers. Therefore what Erasmus wrote, in those measured words, to a personal friend whose integrity he could trust, and what he gave to the world under that double guarantee of his own reputation and the bishop's, is what thousands were saying under their breath, while those few who cried aloud, like Tyndale, fell inevitably into the hysterical scream of a throat that was grappled by murderous fingers. Even scholastic philosophy, before 1500, had lost most of its salt; and Margery herself could not have spoken more contemptuously of the reigning theologians than Erasmus constantly did; nor could she have found cruder contrasts between their teaching and what she found in her

\* It was one of Bishop Pecock's *faux pas* that, meeting the too undeniable Lollard accusation against our bishops as "dumb dogs", he argued that bishops are not bound to be preachers. The anti-Lollard Gascoigne cannot contain his indignation at this apology for spiritual incompetence on the part of the episcopacy.

Bible. The fact that some revival was taking place in the Church on the eve of the Reformation tells in no way against the force of this doctrinal revolt. Revolution notoriously comes most often at the point when there has been just enough improvement to make the multitude hope for more, while it provokes the die-hards to sit all the tighter upon the safety-valve. On this point, again, Erasmus is only the most conspicuous among a great cloud of witnesses; and More backs him up in his famous *Letter to the Unnamed Monk*. For the saint, while doing justice to the piety of those monks who sit in their cloister "like an oyster or a sponge, always fixed to its rock", adds "if we look to labour, this man [Erasmus] sometimes works harder in one day than you [monks] in many months. Or, if we reckon the usefulness of the labour, he has sometimes brought more profit to the Church in a single month, than ye have in many years, unless ye think that some man's fasts or rosaries [*preclus*] carry us as far and wide as so many excellent volumes [of his], whereby the whole world is instructed in righteousness".<sup>2</sup>

We may say of most medieval thinkers, no doubt, what Mr Bernard Shaw has said concerning the communist in modern Moscow; he feels himself in an atmosphere of perfect freedom despite the penal laws; for he never has the slightest temptation to transgress them. But we shall never know how many others are now living in Moscow, and how many there were in Chaucer's London, who thought not with the multitude but for themselves, and would gladly have seen the whole thing swept away. We only know for certain that some such there were; and that, for everyone whom we can trace in written record, there must have been hundreds who, for the most obvious reasons, have left no record behind them. We know also that the medieval clergy, while they discouraged Bible reading among ordinary folk, were themselves in many cases almost incredibly ignorant of the sacred text; indeed, unable even to construe a single sentence of the most important parts of their own daily Mass. And, in process of time, the machinery of coercion, as embodied in the papal or the

episcopal Inquisition abroad and in the statute *De Haeretico Comburendo* at home, began to defeat its own objects. As early as the twelfth century it had driven the scientific mind into the subterfuge of what has been called "the double truth"; the plea that a thing might be theologically true, but philosophically false, or *vice versa*.<sup>3</sup> Ordinary folk, on the other hand, saw more and more clearly that this storm of persecution was, to some extent at least, the violence of panic terror; a truth which became more and more evident in proportion as the persecutors, having struck down the leaders of heresy, descended from their lofty pedestal to treat the humble weaver and cobbler as enemies whose existence constituted an unpardonable danger to the great Roman Church. It is one of the best-known inquisitors, Nicholas Eymeric, writing in about 1375, who complains that few rich heretics are left now; consequently prosecutions are ceasing to be pecuniarily profitable, and therefore the princes of Europe are no longer willing to pay the Inquisitors' expenses.<sup>4</sup> This brings me to the third cause, the Economic.

It is often falsely asserted that the Reformation was a plunder of the poor; that it dispossessed them of their heritage in favour of a squirearchy. The fact is that the medieval Church, on its financial side, was a squirearchy richer and more jealous of its possessions than any which has existed since the Reformation. What that revolution did was to transfer enormous wealth from one squirearchy to another; from a squirearchy which, in its very nature, was intensely conservative and seldom let go anything of its possessions, to another which lived far more among the people, and whose very extravagances often led to the division of land; so that there grew up in Elizabethan and Jacobean times a whole class of small yeoman farmers.

The medieval Church was, no doubt, more friendly to the poor than any State institution of those days would have been. But it was far from that Christian fraternity and generous beneficence which is often claimed for it, and which the earliest Christianity had actually displayed. It was deeply



feudalized; it was no longer a really democratic institution, in any strict sense of that word. Popes were the most absolute sovereigns of their day, and sometimes the most luxurious and most directly responsible for those wars which were chronic in Christendom. Marsilius of Padua and Pierre Dubois noted that last fact already in the early fourteenth century; and Machiavelli repeated it still more emphatically about the time when More was writing his *Utopia*. Bishops and abbots had enormous wealth, and lived too often in ostentation and luxury. Archdeacons and rural deans were notorious takers of bribes. Among the parish clergy, even those who wanted to give generous doles had often little power. The monasteries, which drew two-thirds of the income from nearly one-third of the English parishes, were, it is true, the main distributors of such charities as could be counted upon by the medieval poor: but we have irrefragable evidence that they thus gave back far less than they took.<sup>5</sup> The great Oxford Chancellor Gascoigne described the seven Rivers of Babylon, the seven floods of iniquity; one of these was this absorption of parochial funds by the monasteries.<sup>6</sup> In the north of England, where parishes were fewer, the loss of monastic doles at the Dissolution was much more severely felt than elsewhere; but, during the centuries succeeding that event, the English poor have suffered less, on the whole, than those of France and Austria and Italy and Spain. We of this generation have not too much cause for complacency on this score; but at least we have got beyond the Middle Ages, and can stand without shame in comparison with Continental society.

The friction over tithes, great under any conditions, was much increased by the fact that, in so many cases, those hard-won sheaves of corn went to monks who were necessarily absentees—perhaps even Frenchmen or Italians—or to a parson who was absentee by mere abuse and lack of hierarchical discipline, or to churchwardens whose honesty was not above suspicion. Parochial embezzlement, either by clergy or by laity, bulks large in the episcopal visitation records. Christopher St Germain, the distinguished lawyer who (as

More complained) played "the candid friend" to his Church by setting forth the grievances of laity against clergy, found one of the chief sources of clerical unpopularity in "the extreme and covetous demeanour of some curates with their parishes . . . and, though many spiritual men be not fellows with them in the extremities, yet none of them that have been best and most indifferent have not done anything to reform them that use such extremities, nor to make them think that any default is in them in that doing, but rather as it were with a deaf ear have dissembled it and suffered it to pass over, and have endeavoured themselves more to oppress all the lay people that would speak against it, than reform them that do it".<sup>7</sup> For the offerings which had at first been voluntary became gradually so regular that they were even enforceable by law; they were practically treated in most cases as personal perquisites of the clergy; and they were often extorted with the most cynical disregard of religious proprieties. From at least 1217 onwards, different Church councils attempted to check priests who began their examination in the confessional with enquiries as to non-payment of tithes, and who refused to administer the Holy Sacrament to parishioners who were in arrear with their (originally free-will) Easter offerings.<sup>8</sup> Towards the end of the same century, this prohibition had to be renewed in stronger language, "lest by this taking of money with one hand while Christ's body is offered with the other, the mystery of our Redemption be bought and sold". But the acts of succeeding councils show the same continual struggle against trading in holy things, especially against injunctions of pecuniary fines in the confessional, whether nakedly or under the thin disguise of Masses to be said in the parish church, and therefore to the profit of the priest who imposed them. Wyclif's complaints on this head are borne out by unexceptionable documents; and, more than ten years after Luther had raised the standard of revolt, such refusals to administer the communion to defaulting parishioners were perhaps more frequent in England than they had ever been before; so at least St Germain asserts.

However great a part mere cupidity may have played in the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and however shameful the injustices and the vandalism of its methods, these were at least a few degrees less disgraceful than the suppression of the Templars by the French king in collusion with Clement V. No torture was applied to the English monks as had been done by king and Pope in France; and Henry's worst cruelty, his political execution of the Carthusians, pales before the burning of those Templars for crimes which historians of all schools know to have been imaginary, though confession had been wrung from the victims on the rack. Our dispossessed monks and nuns, as Mr G. Baskerville has shown at last by exhaustive study of the actual documents, were pensioned with such an approach to general regularity and decency as gives the lie direct to what he calls "the indefatigable inaccuracy of sentimental writers" who have been asserting the contrary for the last forty years.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, there is scarcely a country in the world in which it has not been found necessary, since the Reformation, to dissolve the monastic orders and permit them to start again under such State control as that to which all other associations are subjected. As to their moral and material decay in the sixteenth century, the evidence is overwhelming. Anyone who is surprised at Erasmus's bitter comments in his Bible commentaries may turn to those of that most voluminous and orthodox of commentators, Cardinal Hugues de St-Cher, nearly three centuries earlier. This cardinal's strictures, by themselves, would suffice to explain how Henry was able to overturn so easily an institution so venerable and powerful.<sup>10</sup>

Fourthly, and last, let us come to the Political causes. Boniface VIII, in his bull *Unam Sanctam*, formulated explicitly the claims which had been more or less distinctly implied by Gregory VII and Innocent III. That bull is of immense importance, since it is one of the very few papal pronouncements, during all these nineteen centuries of Christian history, which are admitted to be *ex cathedra* by even the most minimizing authorities: by those who admit only a half dozen or less of infallible decrees since Pentecost. In that bull Boni-

face claims authority over all sovereigns, even in the temporal sphere.\* This led to an immediate revolt on the part of the strongest king in Europe, Philippe-le-Bel of France; yet it was duly embodied in Canon Law, where it stood until 1917. Therefore from 1302 onwards, in every land, Church and State were necessarily in such an unstable equilibrium as that which we were all deploring in Europe on the eve of the Great War. There was a mass of explosives which any chance spark might ignite. In all countries, from at least the thirteenth century onwards, there was a growing tendency to look upon the Pope as a foreign potentate drawing immense sums out of the realm. Then, when the Great Schism came, and when even saints could not tell the world whether the true Pope was the man in Rome or the man in Avignon, some began naturally to wonder what truth there was in the Papacy at all. As doubts increased, repressive measures became more violent; we have seen how Archbishop Arundel, in 1407/8, even proclaimed as heretics, in the same breath, the man who denies or misinterprets the Bible, and him who denies or misinterprets a papal decretal. Yet among those decretals he and his contemporaries included a mass of now acknowledged forgeries, together with such genuine documents, almost equally embarrassing to the modern apologist, as the bull *Unam Sanctam*. This schism was healed only by methods which went some way to encourage the idea of national churches, and only after the ventilation of such erastian arguments as had already been used by Marsilius and Ockham in their support of the civil power against the Papacy. Again, when certain serious monastic reforms were initiated by the councils which opposed the Popes, these were carried out, in so far as they ever came to practical success, only under constant threat of physical force by the State, and by the frequent employment of such force. Meanwhile the Papacy, as soon as it could shake itself clear of conciliar control,

\* This claim is withdrawn by modern theologians from the "infallible" sphere, because it is not repeated in the final, "defining", clause. But it is plainly made in the earlier part of the bull, and so also in Boniface's other official pronouncements at this time.

developed more and more frankly into a petty Italian principate, with petty ambitions and petty wars of its own. Any country of Europe, at any moment, might suddenly find itself involved in one of these politico-religious wars.

One of these risks lay in the constant chances of friction with the Pope's army, the clergy. At almost every popular revolt, from the fourteenth century onwards, the mob had attacked monasteries, as now in Spain. From an earlier date still, there had been a steady popular superstition that it was unlucky to meet a priest on the road. We have seen how, when the Black Death came, most priests neglected or fled from the sick. In 1514, the Bishop of London complained that the growth of heresy had made it idle to expect justice for any cleric in the City courts; and in 1529 the Spanish envoy reported to his royal master: "Nearly all the people here [in London] hate the priests."<sup>11</sup> No doubt there were mixed feelings here. No doubt sinners hated the good priests for reproving them, just as good men despised the ignorance and worldliness of bad priests. But even St Thomas More, in the heat of his arguments against Tyndale, was forced to admit that there were far too many clergy, and too little care taken in ordaining them. Those who lived truly up to their profession were too few to counterbalance the contempt felt for those whom Erasmus so often holds up to scorn. It needed very little more to make Englishmen regard these men as an alien body, and their sovereign the Pope as an alien potentate or even as a direct enemy.

That little, it is well known, came through Henry's wish for a divorce. But it was not so much Henry's lusts which kindled the conflagration, as his desire for at least outward decency. His contemporary Francis I was a more notorious libertine, whose name was connected with far more women than Henry's; but such peccadilloes never caused any coolness between him and Rome. Henry, however, needed an heir for his throne; and his quarrel with the Pope was not over lust but over matrimony. We are sometimes told that Anne Boleyn forced his hand by standing out for marriage; but at

the court of Francis any such insistence on the part of a coveted woman would have been futile and ridiculous. Again, even in strict morality, Henry had a slight advantage over the Pope. True, he did ask for a licence of bigamy; but, equally certainly, the Pope was quite ready to negotiate with him about such a licence.<sup>12</sup> When it is pleaded that this negotiation was only a pretence, only a subtle move in that political chess-match by which the pontiff hoped to play for final victory, then this excuse reinforces the point that, in so far as the Reformation was due to political causes, it reflects slightly less discredit on Henry than on Rome.

There is no escaping, at any point in our period, from the significance of the Pope's claim to a Totalitarian State. His Church trumpeted itself as a *Societas Perfecta*, with all the political implications of earthly states, including military force in the last resort; indeed, that claim is so fundamental that it survives to the present day.<sup>13</sup> Pius IX reminded Bismarck that all baptized Germans, whether Catholic or Protestant, were by Church Law papal subjects; and even in this twentieth century Roman theologians have republished, with papal approbation, the claim that their master could in justice (as apart from mere expediency) employ force to bring back all baptized Christians to his fold. Thus, in Tudor times, the change of religion in England was necessarily inseparable from politics. We see this most plainly in Elizabeth's reign. The interrogatory which Roman Catholics dreaded most, that which was regularly imposed after the Armada, and which they called *The Bloody Question*, ran thus: In the event of a Catholic invasion of England, which side would you take, the Queen's, or the Pope's? Upon the man's answer to this question depended his classification as religious nonconformist or political enemy, and therefore his life or death. But how could any government, in those days at least, do less than this? To us, the maxim *Touch not Mine Anointed* may seem an old wives' tale divorced from all present-day political significance; but in Tudor days these papal claims were a political reality more formidable than the policy of any other European State. Henry

and the Reformers, for different reasons, had to face (as Boniface VIII had put it) the Two Swords. They knew that Christ had proclaimed Himself as coming to bring not peace but a sword, and that the New Testament describes the word of God as sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. Of this spiritual sword, rightly or wrongly, the Reformers were convinced that they need harbour no fear. But they had to deal also with that weapon of which Christ had said to Peter: "Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." In Henry's day the full and free exchange of reasons was still so impossible, through the fixed policy of one party and the passions of both, that no state could arrive at a decision without an appeal to arms. And, after all, was it not more honourable thus to break openly with the Pope, than to go on for centuries, like the sovereigns of France and Austria and Spain and the Italian States, in nominal religious submission and loyalty, but with selfish disloyalty always in the background whenever the question touched the sovereign's pocket or his pride?

The Reformation did at least clear the air. An agnostic outsider, to whom modern Protestantism may be as alien in thought as modern Roman Catholicism, may yet recognize clearly the superiority of a world in which those two rival creeds can now exist side by side, as compared with an earlier world in which one party felt bound in conscience to say: "Be my brother in religion, or I shall burn you here and God will burn you to all eternity." Though Protestants have too often disgraced their own tenets by intolerance, yet this division into two parties, each unable to exterminate the other by force, and therefore each driven to vie with the other in religious enthusiasm and reasonable argument and good works, has done more for tolerance and for civilization than was ever done by the ideal of absolute uniformity in belief, whether through argument or through force. Society as a whole did move forward during the Middle Ages; but there was one important field of morality in which it went backward for at

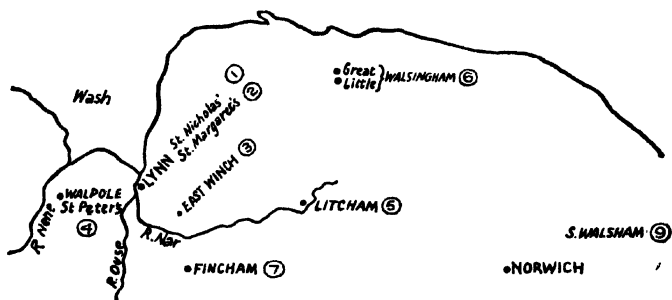
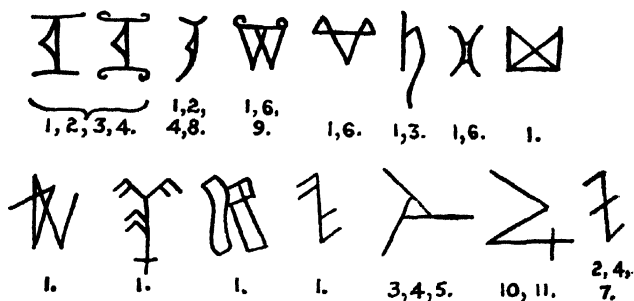
least four centuries before the Reformation: and that field was, the maintenance of religious belief by actual or potential violence. But for the Reformation, it is difficult to see how the world could ever have learned what it has now gathered from the experience of generations; viz. that agreement to differ is more really religious than forced agreement, whether that compulsion be the force of the rack and the stake before men's eyes, or the force of immemorial custom in a society which has been reduced to uniformity by the weeding out and the breeding out of all those men whose thoughts run naturally outside the general groove. For centuries the Church had attempted vainly, and not always even sincerely, to reform herself. It is generally held, even by her stoutest apologists, that she was in 1530 less pure than in 1230; and, though future students may very likely treat this as a somewhat superficial judgment, still it is agreed on all hands that the 300 years preceding the Reformation had brought no material change for the better. Yet nowadays, 400 years after the Reformation, the difference is so enormous that men are often tempted to reject the most definite medieval evidence on no other ground than that it shocks their present ideas of right and wrong: they cannot believe that men so like ourselves essentially, men whom we are so loath to condemn in themselves, should have behaved as they are definitely recorded to have done: there must (it is dimly felt) be some mistake somewhere!

It is not necessary to believe that the Reformers were better men than their opponents; we need only to face the apparent fact that a world in which both parties can live side by side is a better world. Selfish and material causes played too great a part in that change, as in all similar upheavals; but to ascribe the Reformation to such causes alone is to imitate Gibbon's cynicism without Gibbon's extenuating circumstances. Purely political motives have played at least as great a part in the retention of medieval faith in some countries, as in its abandonment elsewhere. It is as easy to find personal defects in the Reformers as to sneer with Gibbon at the gross



falsehoods and unedifying truths with which the early Christian traditions are alloyed; but, when arguments of this kind are unduly pressed, the simplest and truest reply is such a *tu quoque* as Newman constantly used, as the Fathers used, and as Christ used Himself. Half of St Augustine's great *City of God* is devoted to showing that Christianity, with all its faults, is better than the paganism it has replaced. The Reformers, it is true, were only men; but of what sort were those others who for centuries had held the key of knowledge, and who would not suffer others to enter in? Moreover, even in doctrine, the change has been so great that superficial observers get an entirely false perspective; they judge the majoritarian Latin Church of the Middle Ages, which lived by the steady and relentless "liquidation" of its minorities, by what they see and hear around them in that Roman Church which commands less than 6 per cent. in the England of to-day, and thus (to use Cardinal Vaughan's simile) has one hand tied behind its back. Few men or women in modern Britain could sustain successfully that searching cross-examination upon matters of faith which was an essential factor in the proceedings of the medieval Inquisition. Indeed, it might perfectly well be found that, even among the most loyal modern subjects of the Roman Church, there is not one who does not think in his inmost heart, on one or two important points at least, in terms which would have given to the highest medieval authorities excellent reasons for sending him to the stake.

In any case, for good or evil, the Reformation begins the modern world in England. "It is the gigantic figure of Luther, not the comparatively commonplace figure of the victorious Henry VII at Bosworth field, that begins a new age, after which nothing can be the same."<sup>14</sup> Or again, in the words of the late Dr Barry, writing as an orthodox Roman Catholic in *The Cambridge Modern History*: "In truth, it was not the Revival of Learning that shook Europe to its base, but the assault on a complicated and decaying system in which politics, finance and privileges were blended with religion."<sup>15</sup>



IN SUFFOLK.   
 8 Lavenham. 10 Cavendish   
 11 Long Melford

Wandering masons in Norfolk (see p. 200).

The numbers show the churches at which each particular mark may be found repeated. At East Winch and Litcham there are also definite similarities in tracery and mouldings. See details in my *Art and the Reformation*, pp. 154-6.

## NOTES

### CHAPTER 31 (p. 7-35)

(1) A. F. Leach, *Educational Charters and Documents*, xxix and 259.  
 (2) *Social Life*, 54. (3) *Med. Vill.* 254; cf. F. M. Powicke, *Christian Life in the M.A.* (1935), 82. (4) *Comment.* Bk VII, lect. 8.  
 (5) *Social Life*, 179. (6) M. Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, 131ff., 150. (7) A. F. Leach, *l.c.* 402. (8) *Reg. Grandisson*, 1192; *Life in M.A.* II. 113. Grammar-school methods in the later Middle Ages are admirably described in P. S. Allen's *Age of Erasmus*, chap. 11.  
 (9) Trans. A. J. Grant (King's Classics), 59. (10) *Medieval Oxford* (Oxf. Hist. Soc. 1936), 97-8. (11) *Social Life*, 61. (12) J. E. T. Rogers, *Oxford City Documents*, 150ff.; *Life in M.A.* II. 76. (13) *Social Life*, 73. (14) *Stud. in Med. Culture*, 79. (15) *Social Life*, 75. (16) *Ibid.* 71. (17) This story of the 30,000 Oxford students is an admirable instance of what has been called "plundering and blundering". It is still repeated, now and then, by writers who have evidently never handled the book upon which it is based. Archbishop FitzRalph of Armagh, commonly called Armachanus, wrote his *Defensorium Curatorum* in 1357 (E. Browne, *Fasciculus*, II. 473). He there asserts that, in his earlier days, there had been 30,000 students at Oxford, whereas there were not 6000 at this moment. First, we must note the wild extravagance of medieval writers and even statesmen, wherever large numbers are concerned. The Commons, in 1371, voted a tax on the supposition that there were 50,000 parishes in England. In fact there were less than 9000 as parliament could easily have discovered on reference to the bishops. But in volumes of monastic chronicles and similar records it is not infrequently noted that there are 40,000 or 50,000 parishes; and upon this false basis the budget of 1371 was calculated, with a deficit of over 75 per cent. in actual receipts. Secondly, those who quote FitzRalph as attributing this decrease to the Black Death have evidently not read the book itself. FitzRalph, in *this very sentence*, attributes the depopulation of his University to the crooked manoeuvres of the Friars, his inveterate enemies, and the consequent unpopularity of an Oxford in which Friars were the main wire-pullers. This same feud with the Friars impels him to assert that his own diocese produced yearly a crop of 2000 felons of the blackest description—man-slayers, incendiaries, robbers, etc.—whom the Friars regularly absolve from their crimes (p. 468). No careful reader of this treatise can doubt that the archbishop is carried away everywhere by passion and rhetoric. For the most trustworthy arguments on this subject see H. E. Salter, *Medieval*

*Oxford* (1936), 108ff. (18) Salter, *l.c.* 106. (19) J. B. Mullinger in *Encyc. Brit.* (14th ed.), XXVII, 761.

## CHAPTER 32 (pp. 36-59)

(1) Rashdall, *Universities* (1st ed.), I, 68. (2) R. Bacon, *Opp. Ined.* (R.S.), 426. (3) Vol. VI, 607b; compare III, 149b. (4) *Summa Theol.* 1a, q. CII, art. 1. (5) *Ibid.* 1a, 11ae, q. XCVIII, art. 3. (6) *Ibid.* 1a, q. XXXII, art. 4. Compare *Catholic Encyclopaedia* (art. 'Bible', 605b): "The Church adheres to the literal sense of Holy Writ as long as either the context or the nature of the case does not suggest a metaphorical interpretation." Compare Renan's judgment in his *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse* (1883), 280. He points out how the methods of St Thomas were fatal for Scholasticism: they are repeated from generation to generation down to the orthodox theological summaries of the present day. "Everywhere we get the same texts, cut into pieces and separated from the explanatory context, the same triumphant syllogisms founded upon the void, the same default of historical criticism produced by the confusion of dates and of attendant circumstances." (7) *Ibid.* Supp. q. XCV. (8) *Opera* (1745), II, 78; cf. *Rom. and Truth*, I, 51. (9) St Bernardino writes (*l.c.* 77): "Verissime aeternas poenas per Sanctas Scripturas novi." (10) The subject was debated at length in *The Church Times* for March 8th, 15th and 22nd (1935) and *The Listener*, March 20th, August 7th. The earliest orthodox Latin theologian who was quoted by defenders of the modern view as deciding explicitly on their side was Cardinal de Lugo, who wrote in about 1640, when it had already become evident that orthodoxy must abate some of its claims in deference to Protestantism and Freethought. (11) *Buch v. d. Neun Felsen*, p. 54. (12) *Summa Theol.* 1a, q. XXIII, art. 7. (13) F. X. Godts, *De Paucitate Salvandorum* (Roulers, 1899); see especially pp. 25, 30. (14) *Summa Theol.* 1a, q. XXIII, art. 7. (15) See Innocent's own *Register*, Bk II, ep. 209 (*P.L.* CCXIV, 758). Innocent is pressing the Roman claims upon the Patriarch of Constantinople. First, of course, he quotes *Upon This Rock*, etc. and interprets it in that most literal sense which had been rejected by a majority of the early Fathers. Then, the *Feed My Sheep* of John xxi. 16. Christ (he here argues) draws no distinction between one kind of sheep and another: He simply commands *feed my sheep*, thrice over, in order to express clearly that *all men*, without distinction, are committed to Peter's care. Hence it follows indisputably that Greeks, no less than Romans, are subject to the See of Peter. Moreover, on that same occasion, Peter alone of the apostles leapt into the sea. "Now the word *sea* stands for the *world*." This he proceeds to prove by the traditional gloss on Ps. ciii. 25, which rests on a patent misinterpretation of the word *hoc*

in the Vulgate translation: an interpretation, therefore, which is unintelligible even in the modern Roman Catholic (Douay) version, which has here corrected the Vulgate. Innocent then proceeds: "Therefore, in that Peter plunged into the sea, he thereby expressed that singular privilege of the Pontificate whereby he had undertaken the government of the whole world." Moreover, when the Psalmist says "He saved me from many waters", *many waters* means allegorically *many people*; therefore Peter, by walking miraculously on the sea, which is the vastest existing aggregate of waters, "proved that he had received power over all the nations". No interpretation is suggested for the fiasco which terminated that particular Petrine promenade. Lastly (to omit others almost as far-fetched) it was Peter who saw that vision of the great linen sheet wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things, which seemed to him unclean, but of which God said to him *Arise, Peter, slay and eat*. "Whereby", continues Innocent, "is plainly intended the fact that Peter was set over all the nations of the world; since that linen sheet signifieth the world; and the universal character of its contents signifieth all peoples, both Jew and Gentile." Fortified by these Biblical arguments, he requires the Patriarch's attendance at a Church Council, "to render reverence and obedience to Our Apostolic See according to thy canonical rank: lest, if thou disobey (which we do not believe) we be compelled to proceed both against thy Emperor himself (who, if he will, can enforce that which we command) and also against thine own person and the Greek Church". On the strength of interpretations of this kind, the Pope was ready to treat all Greeks as schismatics and, in the event of obstinate resistance, to employ the sword against them. (16) *Decret. Greg.* Lib. I, tit. vii, c. 2. (17) Pars II, c. XXIV, q. I, c. 17. (18) *Seventeen Lectures* (1886), 90. (19) Fr Hilarin Felder, *Gesch. d. wissenschaftlichen Studien im Franziskaner-Orden*, 316. Cf. A. G. Little, *Studies in English Franciscan History*, 193. (20) Rashdall, *Universities* (1st ed.), 438. (21) Ep. 547 (*Opera*, III. 596c). (22) Rashdall, *l.c.* 707-8.

### CHAPTER 33 (pp. 60-72)

(1) C. Singer, *Short History of Medicine* (1928), 61. (2) J. J. Walsh, *Medical History Manuals* (1920), 15. (3) L. Choupin, *Valeur des décisions etc.* 141. (4) E. Eyre (ed.), *European Civilization*, III. 832. (5) C. Singer, *Evolution of Anatomy*, 65.

### CHAPTER 34 (pp. 73-86)

(1) C. Singer, *Evolution of Anatomy*, 63. To this, and to Dr Singer's *Short History of Medicine*, this chapter is very deeply indebted; some

matters I have verified also in Gurlt's encyclopaedic *Geschichte der Chirurgie*. (2) C. Singer, *Short Hist. Med.* 68. (3) *Ibid.* 69. (4) *Ibid.* 72. (5) The above statements may be verified from Gurlt, *l.c.* i. 672 and L. Thomassinus, *Vet. et Nov. Eccl. Disc.* (1706), II. 227-8. (6) P.L. CLVI. 798; *Life in M.A.* II. 7. (7) The voluminous evidence for ecclesiastical prohibitions or restrictions of medicine is briefly and clearly summarized by the editors of *Johannes de Mirfeld*, 129, 159. They give fresh evidence also in support of Sir Thomas Browne's proverb, *Ubi tres medici, duo athei* (p. 132). Fr Hilarin Felder (*l.c.* 392) quotes the text of two of the most important official prohibitions, and comments: "It is plainly signified by these that the study of medicine, since it was not directly connected with theology, was not adapted, as a worldly occupation, to Religious. The Dominicans, in fact, expounded the relevant decisions in that sense, and considered the study of physic, in the sense of medicine, as forbidden by the Church." (8) T. Puschmann, *Gesch. d. medizinischen Unterrichts*, 205 (Eng. trans. 244). (9) C. Singer, *Short Hist. Med.* 71; cf. *Ev. Anat.* 85. (10) P. H. S. Hartley and H. R. Aldridge, *Johannes de Mirfeld*, 151, note: see also p. 129 of the same book for a contemporary summary of ecclesiastical hindrances to scientific medicine. For the "cauldron", see *Ten Medieval Studies*, 41. (11) See Traill's *Social England* (illustrated ed.), II. 122. (12) Arderne, *Treatise on the Fistula* (E.E.T.S.), 1ff.; *Social Life*, 497. (13) *Meddygon Myddfai* (ed. Diverres) (*Le plus ancien texte etc.* 1913), 51; (ed. Pughe), 51. (14) *Clement*, Lib. III, tit. xi, c. 2. (15) To the evidence for lepers and rotten food printed on p. 508 of *Social Life in Britain*, add Bromyard, *Summa Predicantium*, E. iii, 26.

## CHAPTER 35 (pp. 87-108)

(1) *Philosophy and Civilization in the M.A.* 268. (2) *Ten Medieval Studies*, 37. (3) That which I write in the next few pages is developed more fully, with references, in the second chapter of my *Inquisition and Liberty* (Heinemann, 1937), and more fully still in my *Christ, St Francis, and To-day* (C.U. Press), 26-38. (4) Dante, *Paradiso*, XXIV. 106. (5) See the story of Saladin and the Crusaders in Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, dist. IV, c. 15 (ed. Strange, I. 188; trans. Scott and Bland, I. 212). (6) E. Renan, *L'Averroïsme*, introd. iii. (7) Renan, *l.c.* 273; Rashdall, *Universities* (1st ed.), 362, n. 2. (8) *Inferno*, cantos IX and X. (9) Renan, *l.c.* 333, 336. (10) M. Deanesly, *Lollard Bible*, 36. (11) Étienne de Bourbon, *Anecd. historiques* (1877), 308; cf. 291. I deal fully with this subject in *Ten Medieval Studies*, ch. VII. (12) P.L. CLXXXIII. 1088-102; cf. 82, 676. (13) *English Works*, 262, 280, 282; cf. 355. (14) H. C. Lea, *History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages* (1887),

1. 87. (15) *P.L.* CCV. 241, 322. (16) *L'Inquisition*, 284.  
 (17) Eyre, *European Civilization*, III. 699. (18) *P.L.* CCV. 230.  
 (19) *Register*, Lib. XII, ep. 138. (20) *Serm.* 66 in *Cant.* § 12.  
 His ablest Roman Catholic biographer, Vacandard, confessed: "I am inclined to think that Bernard believed in its efficacy, or at least in its juridical value." Then, after quoting the saint textually, he asks: "If Bernard had not believed in the validity of this ordeal, how could he say that the accused were convicted, irrefragably convicted?" And he refers to an article which gives full proof of the belief in this ordeal of water among great Churchmen of the twelfth century. (21) Lea's treatment of this episode is one of the few cases in which Vacandard meets him directly hand to hand and sums up: "it will be seen how the author, *who is nevertheless trying to be impartial*, distorts the facts" (*L'Inquisition* [1907], 36). Any reader who follows the difference of opinion between these two honest men (for Vacandard quotes St Leo's exact words, p. 32) will probably judge that, though the author exaggerates on one side, his critic exaggerates still more on the other. When Lea writes that St Leo declared the heretics ought to be killed Vacandard insists that he has here put into the Pope's mouth words which were actually spoken by the Emperor. Strictly, this is true; but, considering that Leo writes "our fathers acted rightly . . . for they saw that [here follow the Emperor's words justifying the execution]", it is difficult to deny Lea's main point that the Pope, by repeating these words with approval, and with the plain word *saw* where, if he wanted not to commit himself, he would have written *thought*, may be said to have uttered them himself. Incidentally, one critic of Lea, perhaps the bitterest of all, has recently permitted himself to quote this criticism from Vacandard, *with the silent omission of those crucial words which I have here italicized* (see my *Sectarian History*, 68). (22) Eymeric, *Directorium Inquisitorum* (ed. Pegna, Rome, 1585, with approval of Pope Gregory XIII), 654-6; pars III, quaest. LXV. This is one of the main points upon which Baumgarten charges Lea with guilty misrepresentation, yet without a shadow of proof for his accusation beyond the vague unvouched assertions of the Jesuit periodical *Civiltà Cattolica*. Alphandéry (*Encyc. Brit.* 596) supports Lea: and any reader who has access to the British Museum may judge for himself. (23) Eymeric, *l.c.* 517-19. (24) Douais, *Documents etc.* (1900), I. 67. (25) Eymeric, *l.c.* 510. (26) This *Register* is printed in the second part of Limborch's *Hist. Inquisitionis*. The very first page records as follows: " (1) Peter of St Laurent-de-Garrigues\* Visitations of Toulouse twice a year: in the octaves of Easter to the Church of St-Sernin; on the Invention of St Stephen in August [i.e. Aug. 2] at the Church of St Stephen. And the pilgrimages [enjoined] were remitted him by reason of his debility and old age. (2) Tholo-  
 \* This abbreviation signifies "condemned to wear the cross of infamy"; for which see the case of Raymonde on page 401.

sana, wife of Bernard Hugues of Roche-Vidal✠. The minor pilgrimages contained in the Inquisitor's letters, and visitations of Toulouse as above. The Inquisitors reserve the power of increasing, diminishing and augmenting the aforesaid penance, and of bringing back the aforesaid persons to prison, without fresh cause [*sine nova causa*] if they judge it expedient." This is the regular form: the last batch of all (pp. 337-8) differs only in being slightly more explicit. We may trace some of these accused from stage to stage. In March one Raymonde, wife of Jacques Géraud, was condemned, on a confession extorted from her in prison on oath, to wear "two crosses of felt, of saffron colour, on all her garments except her shift; and let one arm be of the length of two palms, and the other cross-piece one palm and a half, and each arm of three fingers' breadth; one on the breast in front and the other between her shoulders at the back; let her never go, whether within or without her house, without displaying these; let her repair or renew them if they are torn or worn out with age". She must also perform a series of penances and pilgrimages and compulsory attendance at Church, and take an oath "to prosecute [*persequantur*] heretics, by whatever name they may be called, and those who believe or abet or harbour or defend them, and all who have fled for heresy's sake". There is the usual reservation for return to prison at the Inquisitor's pleasure *sine nova causa* (p. 214). Either Raymonde gave just cause or the Inquisitor was pleased to exercise his powers afresh; for in Sept. 1322 she was let out again, with a batch which had been "many years in prison" under the same grievous penalties and on the same cat-and-mouse conditions as before (p. 338). This, then, is a specimen of the 137 cases which Professor Guiraud and Mr. Hollis describe as complete acquittals, evidently never having even glanced at this document on the strength of which they flatly contradict such learned and accurate writers as Lea and Tanon! (27) Vacandard, *l.c.* 241ff. (28) *Ibid.* 159. (29) Lea's monumental work has been so unscrupulously handled by popular controversialists on the Roman Catholic side, that I seize this opportunity of rectifying one of the most important misstatements. Far fuller evidence will be found in my booklet on *Sectarian History* (post-free for 2s. 6d. from 72 Kimberley Road, Cambridge), but the following episode deserves to be far more widely known. Professor E. P. Cheyney, in 1911, read a paper on Lea and his writings. He there described how Lord Acton, originator of *The Cambridge Modern History*, invited Lea "to write a chapter in the first volume to be called 'The Eve of the Reformation'". In his letter Lord Acton uses the following expressions: 'This is the most important and most critical and cardinal chapter, which I am anxious to be allowed to place in your hands. It is clear that you are the one indicated and predestined writer, there is no one else. . . . I know of none whom I could go to, if you refuse. . . .' After some other intervening letters, the correspondence was resumed in March and April, 1898, when Mr.



Lea sent the manuscript of the chapter, which was acknowledged by Lord Acton with renewed thanks, and eventually printed exactly as written. Eight years later, after Lord Acton's death, during a controversy that arose concerning his Catholic orthodoxy, a correspondent in the *Tablet*, a London Catholic journal, denied that Lord Acton had asked Mr Lea to write this famous chapter. In answer to this Mr Lea prepared a communication to the same paper giving an outline of the correspondence which I have just described. Before sending this letter, however, he saw an article in the *London Times* of Oct. 30, 1906, by the present Lord Acton, upholding his father's orthodoxy. In a spirit of kindness, and fearing to make this filial task more difficult, Mr Lea decided not to send the correction he had prepared, laid it away among his papers, and the facts are now made public for the first time" (*Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 1, No. 198 (Jan. 1911), pp. xviii, xxvi, repeated in Professor E. C. Bradley's *Henry Charles Lea* (Philadelphia, 1931). Even his severest Catholic critics have restricted their condemnation to a few parts of his work. Lord Bryce, who followed on as next speaker at this meeting, lent his exceptionally weighty authority, saying: "Few recent writers have had their statements so seldom questioned, and rarely indeed was he proved to have been in error. . . . In accompanying him one feels one's self always on firm ground. . . . Mr. Lea was a Protestant by birth and conviction, but he was, as a scholar ought to be, perfectly fair in his treatment of ecclesiastical and religious questions." (30) Montalembert in *Contemp. Review* for Jan. 1875 (p. 200): "I grant indeed that the Inquisition in Spain destroyed Protestantism in its germ; but I defy anyone to prove that it has not given it throughout Europe the support of public opinion and the sympathies of outraged humanity." (31) *Letters to Mary Gladstone*, 185.

#### CHAPTER 36 (pp. 109-118)

- (1) *Hist. of the Papacy* (1907), 1. 67. (2) *De Moderno Ecclesiae Schismate* (ed. Sorbelli), 180. (3) *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.* (1899), 103. (4) Crump and Jacob, *Legacy of the M.A.* 25.

#### CHAPTER 37 (pp. 119-127)

- (1) Among many excellent books on this subject, readers should refer specially to Dr H. B. Workman, *John Wyclif* (Oxford, 1926, 2 vols.); Dr R. L. Poole, *Wyclif and Movements for Reformation* (1889) and B. L. Manning in *Camb. Med. Hist.* VII, ch. xvi. (2) *E.H.R.* (Jan. 1936). (3) *Church History*, Bk IV, cent. xv (1. 53).

## CHAPTER 38 (pp. 128-143)

(1) Much more on this subject will be found in my monograph on *The Black Death* in Benn's sixpenny series. (2) Knighton's *Chronicle* (R.S.), II. 57. (3) B, passus v. 13. (4) Knighton, *l.c.* 59. (5) *Eccl. Hist.* III. 30; cf. IV. 27; W. Bright, *Early English Ch. Hist.* (3rd ed.), 238. (6) Wilkins, *Concilia* (1st ed.), II. 745. (7) This question is of such immense importance for social and religious history that I add here, for the benefit of readers who would wish to follow it more fully, a great deal of evidence for which there was no space in my text. Dr Lunn begins his 6th chapter by noting how the great plagues of more modern times called forth (for instance) the heroism of St Charles Borromeo at Milan in the sixteenth century, and of Bishop Belzunce at Marseilles in the eighteenth; but, in our fourteenth-century England, "the name of this great pestilence is bare of any association with acts of sacrifice". Our bishops did what they could to warn their flocks of its coming, and to make it easier for the sick to get confession and absolution. "So far they proceeded, and then they stopped. Not one went further, and no record has survived which testifies to any outstanding act of charity which one bishop performed during the period of the plague." Mr. Lunn then deprecates too hasty conclusions from this silence, and deals with the bishops' movements *seriatim*. Ely was absent from his diocese at the time. Norwich was William Bateman, founder of Trinity Hall at Cambridge. He also was absent for a short while, during the first deaths in February, but he was at Norwich on the 29th. Before March 7 he was in London, and was absent all April and May. June was by far the worst month in this diocese; on May 30 he was at his manor of Terling in Essex: June 5, at Ipswich: thence he crossed his diocese to Dereham (8th) and backwards to Yarmouth (11th). Thence inland to Beccles (13th), and thence to Terling (18th) and London (19th). We cannot trace him in his diocese again until July 10, at his manor of Hoxne, 15 miles away from Norwich, the city in which mortality was certainly very heavy, even when exaggerations have been cleared away. At the beginning of August he was at South Elmham, 15 miles from Norwich. The scanty further records do not once locate him at Norwich. The last places him at Poringland, 5 miles off. From all this Mr Lunn infers that "the plague does not seem to have provoked anything exceptional from Bateman", either in the form of self-sacrifice or of running away from his city and diocese. Yet for myself, I cannot help feeling that the record is less colourless than this estimate would imply. Norwich, his capital, was one of the greatest cities in the kingdom: Yarmouth and Ipswich also were high in the scale, and Lynn not far behind. At Norwich he spent a week or less during the whole

period, and not at the worst time: at Yarmouth two days, at Ipswich three; Lynn he apparently never visited at all. Yet Norwich and Yarmouth certainly suffered very heavily indeed, and at Lynn the bishop had his convenient country palace of Gaywood, three miles from the town gate. The records show Bateman to have spent certainly more than 15 weeks, and probably a great deal more, in London or at village manors during those 9 months of unprecedented mortality in his diocese. Again, the bishop of *Bath and Wells* "during his long episcopate of 34 years, is recorded as having been in Wells only 9 times, and he never once visited Bath". He was accustomed normally to spend about half the year, from November or December to May, in his favourite manor at Wiveliscombe, a remote village in the very corner of his diocese. On August 17, 1348, the bishop had warned his flock that a dire pestilence had invaded the land and was creeping upon them: let them repent and return to Almighty God. The actual ravages certainly began in his diocese before January 10, 1349; and yet meanwhile the bishop lay at his wonted Wiveliscombe until May 13 at least. Thenceforward he visited different towns and villages in his diocese until November 25, when he was again at Wiveliscombe until May 14. "His itinerary during the period June-November 1349 contains nothing to differentiate it from his earlier and later summer tours. It was varied neither more nor less. His retreat to Wiveliscombe was not prolonged by reason of the plague. Everything went on as usual." That is, if we take the 12 months from January 10, 1349 to January 10, 1350, we shall find that nearly half ( $24\frac{1}{2}$  weeks out of 52) were spent in that remote corner of his diocese. *Lincoln* was in the hands of Gynewell, a prelate of at least average character and energy. Mr Lunn here sums up: "Once more there is the same inevitable and identical conclusion—the Black Death made precious little difference to Gynewell." He went about, visiting his diocese, with the regularity natural to a newly appointed bishop. Grandisson, of *Exeter*, was very distinctly above the average of contemporary bishops. He also was nearly always accustomed to stay at his favourite village manor of Chudleigh for Christmas and the spring. This year, 1348-9, he extended his stay there for 4 months longer than usual, and was scarcely ever at Exeter during the plague. On the other hand, Chudleigh was fairly central for the whole diocese, and it lay in "one of the worst plague spots, not only in Exeter but in England". The bishop of *Lichfield* moved about a good deal, and, so far as can be traced, mainly in the least affected areas: certainly not in the greater towns of his diocese. The archbishop of *York* spent the whole of the plague period at three manors of his diocese, two of which were in villages and one in the small town of Ripon. *Rochester* was aged and decrepit; he does not seem to have visited any of his towns, but many of his attendants died, which "at least indicates that the bishop did not entirely escape risks of personal infection". *Canterbury* records are very defective, but two archbishops died during this period, very pro-

hably of the plague. *Worcester* administered his diocese from his village manor of Hartlebury, and died August 6, 1349: he had no successor until the plague was over. The prior visited widely; but we have no evidence that this was more than the usual *sede vacante* formality, which cost little trouble and brought in rich fees. For *Salisbury* "the Black Death did not influence Wyville's movements in the slightest". For *Winchester* "here, again is the same conclusion. Edyngdon's whereabouts were little affected by the Black Death". For *Hereford*, "meagre as are the details of Trillek's itinerary which have survived, they betray nothing unusual". After this exhaustive survey from all the episcopal registers available, Dr Lunn sums up. "But the strangest feature of all is that Trillek himself never caught the disease. . . . Trillek admitted to sacred orders no less than 1231 clerks. Add to these the numbers of those instituted to benefices in 1349 (i.e. 159) and something approaching 1400 represents the total of those with whom the bishop must have come into close personal contact during the Plague Year. From this angle, one can easily visualize the great risks of contagious infection which the majority of these bishops daily incurred. The increased mortality among the royal coroners is evidence of this risk. But one of the great perplexities of this bewildering Plague in England lies in the remarkable escape of the bench of bishops from the fatal effects of the Black Death; for two sees only were vacant out of seventeen. And what is applicable in Trillek's case, is true, in a greater or lesser degree, in the case of the others." I must confess myself unable to follow this conclusion, even though we had no more evidence before us than these bare itineraries. Indeed, Dr Lunn himself seems to take away from the bishops, with one hand, that which he grants with the other. We may not unfairly compare a calamity of this magnitude to the sudden outburst of a great war, and these bishops to the superior officers of an army. Surely something more is demanded, in both cases, than this testimonial of "nothing to differentiate", and "everything went on as usual". Sometimes we find, indeed, definitely less than usual, when such a prelate as Grandison stayed away four months longer than usual from his own city of Exeter, and lay in a great moorland manor where, even though the mortality were worst in the villages around, he and his household would avoid all the worst risks except in so far as a bishop's ordinary routine work was dangerous. But is it not easy to exaggerate that danger? The business of institution could well have been carried on in a great hall, with bishop and clerks at one end and candidate at the other, except for a very brief space of personal contact. Indeed, it might have been arranged in even more distant fashion than this. So, again, with the 1231 clerks whom Trillek ordained. The ceremony would take place in a cathedral or some other spacious church, attended by scarcely any miscellaneous congregation, and with only a moment or two of personal contact in each case with a candidate who was not

specially likely to spread infection. It cannot be compared with the coroner's work, faced with a corpse and a miscellaneous gathering in a far smaller and more probably infected building; still less with that of a devoted priest beside one deathbed after another. Dr Lunn's own conscientious statistics would seem to suggest very plain reasons why, when more than 40 per cent. of the beneficed clergy were dying, only 12 per cent. died from the episcopal bench. For a great deal of fuller evidence, see my *Black Death*, 51-60. There are 22 chroniclers, English and foreign, who mention the behaviour of the priests at all, for good or evil: I do not reckon here those who might be taken to condemn them by implication, as when a Pisan chronicler writes "all men fled from death". The only really definite favourable testimonial is from Catania, where it is said "the priests did not in any way fear to go to the sick men's houses through *excessive fear of death*". No other among the eight most favourable witnesses goes so far as this; and two of them contrast the real self-sacrifice of friars with the flight or timid negligence of the parish priests. Of the remaining frankly unfavourable chroniclers, most give the same sort of evidence as Birchington: e.g. "even the priests and doctors fled in fear from the sick and dead": "the pope, shut up in his own chamber, wherein great fires were constantly burning, gave access to no man." For all these witnesses we must of course make the same allowance for medieval exaggeration which we have made repeatedly on other subjects. But, looking carefully at each, we must see that such a discount would render their testimony almost unanimous. If for the "all" of these unfavourable witnesses we substitute "the majority", that statement will be contradicted by only one, or perhaps two, of the more favourable testimonies. We must remember, again, that nearly all the 22 witnesses are themselves clerics testifying to the behaviour of their own order, and that (as St Thomas More frankly acknowledged) the temptation of clannishness was very strong among the clergy. True, there were often strong jealousies also: but we cannot suppose that (to take a few instances) the Carmelite of Paris, and the Canon of Bruges, and the Bishop of Strassburg's chaplain, and the Lombard cardinal's nephew, and the Dominican of Pisa slandered the parish clergy with wholesale and gratuitous falsehoods; and that only one or two writers could be found to oppose these slanders plainly: indeed, such an excuse would only cast a darker shade upon medieval society. Dr Lunn, in a later communication, has convinced me that, with regard to the refusal or resignation of benefices, I have not drawn a sufficiently clear distinction between the days when the plague was actually raging and those later weeks or months during which the deaths seem to have ceased. But, however clearly we may try to draw this line, it seems impossible to rule out the influence of fear for some considerable time after men were no longer dying all around. Moreover, my main point is unaffected; viz. that the clergy lost seriously in public respect. For we

can scarcely suppose that those priests who suffered parishioners to die without the Sacraments were less criticized when they had mercenary motives than if they had been driven away by fear. With regard to the Bishops, he points out that it would be difficult to find any on the Continent who did more than his English brethren for visitation or relief of the sick. That is quite true; the Pope took the most elaborate precautions to cut himself off from the whole of his flock. But here, again, the fact rather strengthens my main thesis, that the clergy lost so much ground in the Black Death as to explain a great deal of the anticlericalism which confessedly influenced the later Middle Ages. (8) H. Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, I. 42 and 375-6. Each of these authors writes of his own diocese. Birchington was a Canterbury monk almost or quite contemporary with the plague: the first "edition" of his chronicle breaks off at 1367 (Wharton, xx). Dene was a notary in the service of a distinguished bishop, Hamo of Hythe (*ibid.* xxxiii), who ruled from 1319 to 1352. His chronicle extends in its present form from 1314 to 1350 (the last 8 years seem to be lost); he is therefore in the strictest sense contemporary with what he records. It should be noted how seriously Cardinal Gasquet minimizes these two men's plain evidence (*Gt Pestilence*, 105; *Black Death*, 93). (9) B, *Prologue*, 83.

(10) For the loose sense in which the phrases *facere* or *conficere Corpus Christi* were used, even by theologians, see correspondence in *The Times* from Dec. 12, 1924 to Jan. 3, 1925. Abbot Ford, by far the most learned of the correspondents, appealed not very successfully to pagan classical usage; for his authorities, Cicero and Virgil, writing of altar-sacrifices, used *facere* quite differently, not with the accusative but with the ablative. Moreover, we sometimes find, in this matter of priestly privilege, the most startling language from great writers. St Norbert, Archbishop of Magdeburg and founder of the Great Premonstratensian Order, says in one of his sermons "O priest, thou art not thyself, for thou art a god"—O Sacerdo, tu non es tu, quia deus es (Ch. Taïée, *Prémontré*, I. 155). In the fourteenth century, Peter of Palermo (Petrus Hieremieae), in his *Lententide Sermons*, put the priest even above the Virgin Mary, since she cannot absolve sinners as he does after confession (*Quadragesimale*, Sermon xx). (11) *Piers Plowman*, B, VI. 336.

(12) B. H. Putnam, *Statute of Labourers*, 169. (13) Traill, *Social England* (illustrated ed.), II. 322, 532, 570, 753. Mr H. E. Bell of the Public Record Office has worked out the statistics of parochial institutions apart from exchanges and resignations—a pretty safe index of mortality—in two dioceses, for (A) 1348-50 and (B) 1361-2 respectively. Exeter A 435; B 253. Hereford A 190; B 65 [record slightly incomplete]. Compare Prof. A. Hamilton Thompson on "Pestilences of the Fourteenth Cent. in Dioc. York" (*Archaeol. Journal*, vol. LXXV).

## CHAPTER 39 (pp. 144-156)

- (1) For this subject the most valuable monograph is that of S. Luce, *La Jeunesse de Bertrand du Guesclin*. The Globe Froissart gives the atmosphere vividly, in spite of Froissart's frequent inaccuracies of detail. (2) Luce, *l.c.* 125ff. (3) *Med. Vill.* 342. (4) H. Pirenne, *Econom. and Soc. Hist. of Med. Europe*, 98, 100. (5) *Mémoires* (ed. Buchon), 139a. (6) *Social Life*, 33, 510. (7) *Mémoires* (ed. Buchon), 136a.

## CHAPTER 40 (pp. 157-172)

- (1) *Piers Plowman*, B, xx. 60 (cf. *Five Centuries of Religion*, II. 282). Friars and monks joined in with Antichrist for the sake of filthy lucre,

"And all the convent forth cam to welcome that tyraunt,  
And alle hise, as wel as hym, saue onlich folis;  
Which folis were well leuer to deye than to lyue loyalty  
Lenger, sith leuté was so rebuked,  
And a fals fende antecriste ouer alle folke regned."

- (2) *Archiv f. Litt.- und Kirchengesch.* II. 641ff. (3) W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, ch. IV. (4) E.E.T.S. vol. 20. (5) Evelyn Underhill in *Camb. Med. Hist.* VII. 804-7. (6) An admirable edition of this remarkable autobiography, reasonably modernized in spelling, etc. for the ordinary reader, has just been published by the owner of the unique MS., Col. Bowden-Butler. (7) See L. Capéran, *Le Problème du salut des infidèles* (1934), especially pp. 184ff. (8) *Naissance de l'esprit laïque*, II. 223. (9) *Comentum* (ed. Lacaita), v. 39. (10) Here is the original in Orm's own spelling. Throughout the poem, he makes a *short* syllable by doubling the consonant:

"Forrprihht se Jesuss fullhtnedd wass,  
He wennde himm inntill wesste.  
Pe Goddspell sezzp patt he wass ledd  
Purh Gast inntill pe wesste,  
Annd patt for patt he shollde paer  
Beon fandedd purrh pe deofell.  
Crist bilae i wessteland,  
Forr patt he wollde fasstenn,  
He toc pa to fasstenn paer

Paer he wass i pe wesste.  
 All wiipputenn mete & drinnch  
 Heold Crist hiss fasste paere  
 Fowwertiz dazhess azz onnan  
 Bi dazhess, & bi nahhtess.  
 Whanne hiss fasste forpedd wass  
 Pa lisste himm affterr fode."

(*Ormulum* (ed. R. Holt, 1878), II. 39.)

- (11) E.E.T.S. vol. 49, p. 95. (12) E.E.T.S. (1867), 5, 7. (13)  
*Piers Plowman*, C, IV. 51; cf. A, III. 49, B, III. 48.

#### CHAPTER 41 (pp. 173-197)

- (1) B, x. 300. (2) B, x. 317. (3) B, v. 172, 460. (4) B, XI.  
 371. (5) C, VI. 92. (6) B, IX. 158; XI. 16, 45; XV. 3ff., 48;  
 XVI. 3; cf. A, XII. 6. (7) B, XIII. 135. (8) B, XI. 336. This illustration  
 of the magpie had already been used by two distinguished Parisian  
 philosophers in the early thirteenth century: Bishop Guillaume  
 d'Auvergne (*Opp.* 1674, I. 1058) and Guillaume d'Auxerre (*In Sent.*  
 Regnault [1505], 758): "artificium picae, quo compingit nidum suum,  
 quem nemo carpentariorum vel architectorum effigiare potest."  
 (9) B, XIII. 440. (10) B, XI. 180. (11) B, VII. 105.  
 (12) B, VI. 25, 117. (13) B, v. 517. (14) B, I. 5.  
 (15) B, I. 71. (16) B, II. 5. (17) B, VII. 106;  
 but see the whole of this passus. (18) Hen. a Gandavo,  
*Quodlibeta* (Venice, 1613), II. 388a, 390c, 391a (*Quod.* xv, quaest.  
 XIV). (19) B, x. 101; cf. 52. (20) Gerson, *Opera* (1606), II.  
 556a, 649b. (21) B, xx. 212. (22) Jeremiah v. 30. (23) *Blue*  
*Book on Malta* (1930), 48.

#### CHAPTER 42 (pp. 198-217)

- (1) For this subject the reader should consult W. R. Lethaby, *Westminster and the King's Craftsmen*; D. Knoop and G. P. Jones, *The Medieval Mason* (the first full exploitation of the rich documentary evidence by two writers whose artistic interest is reinforced by special competence in economic history). The present chapter is mainly a summary from my own *Art and the Reformation*. (2) *Art and Ref.* 133. (3) *P.L.* CXLII. 651. (4) *St F. 10 D.* (2nd ed.), 65, 366.  
 (5) *Art and Ref.* ch. v, esp. 95ff. (6) *Ibid.* 73-4. (7) *Ibid.* 65ff.  
 (8) *Ibid.* 59ff. (9) *An Introduction to Freemasonry*, by Prof. D. Knoop and Mr G. P. Jones, teachers of Economics and Econ. Hist. at Sheffield University (Manch. Univ. Press, 1937). See especially pp. 62ff.



- (10) *Comentum* (ed. Lacaita), III. 309. (11) *Art and Ref.* 88.  
 (12) *Ibid.* 93. (13) *Ibid.* 132. (14) *Ibid.* 287. (15) *Ibid.*  
 99ff. (16) *Iliad*, VI. 208. (17) *Camb. Ant. Soc. Trans.* (1869),  
 64ff. (18) *Dives and Pauper*, Com. I, c. 51 *ad fin.*

## CHAPTER 43 (pp. 218-236)

(1) For Sindolf see *Life in M.A.* IV. 52-7. The other writer, Brother Ludwig of Wessobrunn in Bavaria, ended his copyist's work with three pathetic verses: "The book which you now see was written in the outer seats [of the cloister]; while I wrote I froze; and, what I could not write by the beams of day, I finished by candle-light." (Wattenbach, *Schriftwesen des Mittelalters* (1896), 287; cf. 518.) (2) *Opera* (R.S.), I. 72; cf. Rashdall, *Universities* (1st ed.), II. 341. (3) T. G. Law, *Collected Essays* (1904), 7. (4) P.L. CLXXII. 1148; Bromyard, *Sum. Pred.* E, iii. 24; E. K. Chambers, *Med. Stage*, I. 28ff. (5) See *Rutebeuf*, by Prof. L. Cledat; a study of a typical *jongleur*. (6) Mary Darmesteter's *Froissart* (Hachette, 1894) is an admirable biography of this poet-chronicler. (7) His works are published by the E.E.T.S. (vols. 72-3).

## CHAPTER 44 (pp. 237-264)

- (1) *Fulk Fitzwarine* (King's Classics), 42. (2) *La Chevalerie*, 681-3.  
 (3) *Social Life*, 400. (4) *Ibid.* 396; so also for *Mén. de Paris*.  
 (5) *Depos. Durbam* (S.S. 1845), 20-1. (6) *I walked by Night*,  
 edited by Miss Haggard. (7) T. Wright, *Womankind in Western Europe*, 245. (8) *St F. to D.* (2nd ed.), 98ff. (9) *Social Life*,  
 497. (10) Abbé Fleury, *Hist. Éclésiastique*, an. 1264. (11) J. Brand, *Popular Antiquities* (ed. Bohn), I. 506. (12) *Med. Vill.*  
 267. (13) *Reg. Grandisson*, II. 1055, 1120. (14) *Jus Eccles.*  
 pars II. tit. XVII. c. 5.

## CHAPTER 45 (pp. 265-279)

- (1) L. Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government in the M.A.* (1924), 217.  
 (2) MS. Royal 6 E. VI, f. 214a; *Life in M.A.* III. 119. (3) Gratian,  
*Decretum*, pars II, causa XXXIII, q. 5, cc. 11 to 19. (4) *Utopia* (ed.  
 Lumby, 1879), 87, 124, 156. (5) Gautier, *La Chevalerie*, 350;  
 Alwyn Schultz, *Höfisches Leben*, I. 163. (6) E.E.T.S. (1868), 25.  
 (7) W. Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* III. 438 (chap. xx). (8) *Rotuli Parliam-  
 entorum*, II. 239a and III. 218a. (9) Pollock and Maitland, *Hist.*  
*Eng. Law* (1st ed.), II. 429. (10) *Ibid.* I. 467; Crump and Jacob,

- Legacy of the M.A.* 349. (11) Pollock and Maitland, *l.c.* II. 504.  
 (12) *Rot. Parl.* IV. 158a. (13) H. T. Riley, *Memorials*, 277;  
*Social Life*, 455; *Legacy of the M.A.* 412. (14) *Legacy of the M.A.*  
 412. (15) *Social Life*, 455. (16) *Rot. Parl.* V. 112b; *Economic*  
*Journal* (June 1916), 285. (17) Lyndwood, *Provinciale* (1679),  
 append. 155; *Social Life*, 455. (18) *Paston Letters* (1900), I. 89.  
 (19) G. F. Browne, *Importance of Women in Anglo-Saxon Times*, 19.  
 (20) *Prediche Volgari*, III. 176; *Chaucer and his England*, 215.  
 (21) *Robertus Richardinus* (Scot. Hist. Soc. 1936), 112, 114-15.  
 (22) Crump and Jacob, *Legacy of the M.A.* 401-2. (23) Gratian,  
*Decretum*, pars II, causa XXVII, q. 1, c. 14. Therefore French law, until  
 the Revolution, made it a capital offence: see C. L. Richard, *Analysis*  
*Conciliorum* (1778), IV. 135. (24) Gratian, *Decretum*, pars I,  
 dist. XIII, c. 2. (25) More, *English Works* (1557), 136: "Ye be  
 wiser I wrote well, than the gentlewoman was, which in talking once  
 with my father whan she harde saye that our Lady was a Jew, first could  
 not beleve it, but saide, what ye mock I wis, I pray you tel trouthe. And  
 whan it was so fully affirmed that she at last bileved it, was she a  
 Jewe quod she, so help me God and halidom I shall love her the worse  
 while I live." (26) Renan, *Averroës*, 161. (27) Pierre Dubois,  
*De Recuperatione*, 79ff. (28) *Social Life*, 456. (29) Tyndale's  
*Answer to Sir T. More's Dialogue* (Parker Soc.), 18. (30) *Chaucer*  
*and his England*, 220. (31) *Legacy of the M.A.* 407. (32) T.  
 Wright, *Womankind in Western Europe*, 158-9. (33) Erasmus,  
*Ep.* 65 (*Opera*, III. i. 56). (34) *Social Life*, 450. (35) *Ibid.*  
 434. (36) T. Wright, *l.c.* 223, 230. (37) *P.L.* CXCIX. 393.

## CHAPTER 46 (pp. 280-298)

- (1) T. Wright, *Womankind in Western Europe*, 47. (2) S. Baluze,  
*Miscellanea*, IV. 383. (3) Pollock and Maitland, *Hist. Eng. Law*, II.  
 437; cf. I. 482-5. (4) *Legacy of the M.A.* 414. (5) Pollock  
 and Maitland, *l.c.* II. 391. (6) *Opera* (1704), v. 650. (7)  
 Pollock and Maitland, *l.c.* II. 392. (8) *Salt Collections*, VIII. 134.  
 (9) *Ibid.* 135. (10) *Cal. Early Chancery Cases*, I. 82. (11)  
*Médecin Malgré lui*, II. 2. (12) R. W. Chambers, *Sir Thomas More*  
 (1935), 95; cf. Erasmus, *Ep.* 447 (*Opera*, VI. 475). (13) *In IV Sent.*  
 dist. 26, q. 3. (14) *Opera* (1704), v. 677. (15) *Chaucer and*  
*his England*, 109. (16) *Ibid.* 205; L. Gautier, *La Chevalerie*, 352;  
 compare T. Wright, *l.c.* 176. (17) Addis and Arnold, *Catholic*  
*Dictionary* (10th ed. by Dr Scannell), 554. (18) *P.L.* CVI. 189.  
 (19) *P.L.* CXLIV. 283-5. (20) *Ibid.* 164; cf. 93. (21) T.  
 Wright, *l.c.* 166. (22) *Summa Predicantium*, A, XVII, § 3.  
 (23) B, II. 60; XV. 236; XX. 135. (24) *Mirour de l'Homme*, II.  
 18,461ff. (25) *Opera* (1704), v. 627, 641, 666, 670. (26)

Pollard, *Henry VIII* (1905), 207. I give the evidence more fully in *Jesuits and the Middle Ages*, 27-8 (Wessex Press, Taunton, 6d. post-free). (27) *Utopia* (ed. Lumby), 123. (28) *Opera* (1704), vi. 476 (letter 447). (29) *Depos. Durham* (S.S. 1845), 26ff. (30) *Reg. Romeyn*, i. 70. (31) *Reg. Stapeldon*, 169 (A.D. 1319); *Chancer and his England*, 181. (32) *Memorials of K. Hen. VII* (R.S.), 223ff. (33) Froissart (tr. Berners, 1812), II. II.

## CHAPTER 47 (pp. 299-317)

(1) Rashdall, *Universities* (1st ed.), II. 538. As he points out, Nominalism was the less idealistic of the two rival currents in medieval philosophy. The pure Realist followed Plato, and interpreted him in the extremest sense: everything here on earth has its prototype in idea, that is, in the mind of God. A jest founded upon this extreme realism may be found in my *St Francis to Dante* (2nd ed. 90). To the Realist, therefore, the general was more real than the particular; the colour *white* or *black* was more real than a white or black horse. To the extreme Nominalist, on the other hand, the particular thing is the reality, and genera, species, or qualities are mere words which we coin to describe them. The tide of controversy in the schools oscillated between these two extremes throughout the Middle Ages, following in general, as might be expected, a middle course. But William of Ockham was a strong Nominalist; and his tenets, though condemned by Rome, were on the whole the dominant tenets of later Scholasticism. (2nd ed. I. 40; II. 263.) (2) *Fasc. Zizaniorum* (R.S.), 307; Rashdall in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, Wyclif, 226. (3) B, x. 52, 100. (4) B, VI. 46. (5) B, III. 76. (6) B, XI. 192. (7) B, XIX. 34. (8) Gierke, *Polit. Theories* (trans. Maitland), 323. (9) *Life in M.A.* III. 62. (10) *Comentum* (ed. Lacaita, I. 579) on *Inf.* XVII. 52. (11) Nicole Bozon (ed. Toulmin Smith), 35; *St F. to D.* (2nd ed.), 340. (12) *Town Life in Fifteenth Century*, II. 32. (13) *Ibid.* I. 18. (14) Especially 87ff., 127-8. This valuable volume comes most opportunely as the 100th publication of the Oxford Historical Society. (15) G. de Lagarde, *Naissance de l'esprit laïque*, II. 91. My other quotations from this author are from the same volume, pp. 189, 193, 328. (16) Statute of 1 Hen. VII, c. 4. (17) Gasquet, *The Eve of the Reformation* (1900), 339: "it was popular government in a true sense that then regulated all parochial matters. Every adult of both sexes had a voice in this system of government." Compare the same author's Catholic Truth Society pamphlet, *The Layman in the Pre-Reformation Parish*, 71: "The entire management of these parish funds was in the hands of the people." The Rt Hon. J. F. Hope, as a Roman Catholic layman, recently ventured to suggest some sort of reversion to this state of things; but he was at once put into his place

by the Rt Rev. Mgr Provost Moriarty (*Catholic Herald*, March 2nd, 1929; *Catholic Times*, March 15th; *Universe*, March 20th). The result was a pamphlet by Mr. W. Woollen, *The Layman in the Parish* (Sands and Co. 6d.), in which the evidence is fairly stated. Similar evidence is given by Miss A. Abram (*English Life and Manners in the later M.A.* 102): "In the 15th century municipal authorities took a prominent part in the provision and administration of poor relief. At Sandwich, the Burgesses controlled two hospitals, and at Rye and other towns money for charitable purposes was supplied by municipal funds. In Lydd corn was distributed at Easter and Christmas. The 'almys' of the town of Southampton 'were settled on a plan', and lists were kept of the weekly payments: in 1441 they amounted each week to £4 2s. 1d. a sum which was then large enough to relieve about a hundred and fifty people. The Corporation of Reading expended payments made for the use of the town weights and scales upon the poor and infirm. The arrangements managed by the civic officials were of a more practical and business-like character than the picturesque but indiscriminate charity of wealthy nobles and monasteries, and when it became necessary for the State to organize poor-relief, it took many hints from them." Strong evidence in the same direction has lately been published by Dr. W. J. Marx, of Mount St Joseph College, *The Development of Charity in Medieval Louvain* (1936). His last chapter describes in full the "Passing of Control from Church to Town" in the century and a half before the Reformation. (18) A. F. Leach, *Educational Charters and Documents* (introd. xxxviii). (19) J. H. Lupton, *John Colet*, 166-7. (20) L. Dacheux, *Jean Geiler*, 55, 90. (21) R. L. Poole, *Illustrations of Medieval Thought* (S.P.C.K.), 68. (22) *Opera Inedita* (R.S.), 92, 351, 424, 434-5, 464-6, 474. (23) H. Maxwell-Lyte, *Hist. Univ. Oxford*, 434ff. (24) *Ibid.* 437. (25) *Ibid.* 433. (26) *Fisher's English Works* (E.E.T.S. 1876).

#### CHAPTER 48 (pp. 318-336)

(1) While fully sensible of the extraordinary value of Prof. R. W. Chambers's *Sir Thomas More*, which is likely long to remain the standard work on this subject, I am bound to express dissent from his tendency to minimize the critical value of *Utopia*, and to find therein more orthodox Roman Catholicism than the book really shows. Considering More's personal experiences, and the circumstances of his time, it would be little short of a miracle if this man, however great, should have retained in his later years the freedom of a young man's outlook, or that More the chancellor and religious polemist should have been wholly consistent with More the intimate friend of Erasmus and the admired Oxford or London wit. As to More's responsibility for

Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, Froude seems to describe it with little or no exaggeration in his *Erasmus*, pp. 196, 202. (2) *Utopia* (ed. Lumby), 131ff. (3) "Machiavelli und Morus", in *Menschen die Geschichte machten*, 217. (4) *Internat. Journ. Ethics* (Jan. 1915), 134. He writes: "if we are to judge by results, we cannot regret that such wars have taken place." Again, in *Which Way to Peace?* (1936, p. 51), he writes: "There have been wars that have done good—for example, the American War of Independence, and, to take a case where no legal pretext existed, Caesar's conquest of Gaul." (5) For instance Jean Jaurès, *L'Armée Nouvelle*, translated and summarized in *Democracy and Military Service* (72 Kimberley Road, Cambridge, 15.). (6) *Utopia* (ed. Lumby), 132. (7) *Ibid.* 146. (8) *Ibid.* 155-9. (9) *Ibid.* 106. (10) Aquinas writes (*Summa Theol.* 2a, 2ae, q. XI, art. 3): "for it is far worse to corrupt the faith, through which cometh the soul's life, than to coin false money, whereby our earthly life is sustained. Wherefore, if forgers of money or other malefactors are justly handed over to immediate death by worldly princes, much more may heretics, from the moment they are convicted of heresy, be not only excommunicated but also justly slain. . . . Arius was but a single spark in Alexandria; but, since he was not forthwith extinguished, the flame of him ravaged the whole world." More, in his later life, not only equated heresy with murder but even, once at least, judged it as definitely worse (*English Works* (1557), 901; cf. 209, 210, 995). His attitude towards married priests, in those later days, is even less consonant with his *Utopia*; e.g. *English Works*, 485: "For sith the marriage is no marriage, it is but whoredom itself. And I am sure also that it defileth the priest more than double and treble whoredom, sith that his marriage being, as it is, unlawful, and thereby none other but whoredom, doth openly rebuke and shame the sacraments." A priest, by public marriage in church, "cometh there to bind himself to shameless perpetual whoredom". (11) *Utopia*, l.c. 144. (12) G. de Lagarde, *Naissance de l'esprit laïque*, II. 16. (13) *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, IV. 6199; VI. 1164, 1249; A. F. Pollard, *Henry VIII*, 332: "He told Chapuys that if Charles invaded England he would be doing 'a work as agreeable to God as going against the Turk', and suggested that the Emperor should make use of Reginald Pole 'to whom, according to many, the kingdom would belong' (Chapuys to Charles, 27th September, 1533). Again, says Chapuys, 'the holy Bishop of Rochester would like you to take active measures immediately, as I wrote in my last; which advice he has sent to me again lately to repeat' (10th October)." (14) The bull is printed in Bp Burnet's *Reformation* (Records, part I, Bk III, § 9; ed. 1841, II. lxxiii). (15) R. W. Chambers, *Sir Thomas More*, 330. (16) I deal more fully with this episode in *Inquisition and Freedom* (1937). (17) O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Elizabeth*, 157-62.

## CHAPTER 49 (pp. 337-352)

(1) Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, LIX. 324 (serm. XL in Joh.); cf. 235, 346. (2) E. Brown, *Fasciculus*, II. 474. (3) Neander, *Church History* (Bohn), III. 181. (4) G. de Lagarde, *Naissance de l'esprit laïque*, II. 70-5. (5) Marsilius (ed. Previté-Orton), 112, 281. (6) Ullmann, *Reformers before the Reformation* (Eng. ed.) II. 349. (7) More's *Dialogue*, Bk III, chs. 14-16. Again, in his *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, he condemns all the translations lately made of the Psalter, Primer, and New Testament into English. He adds "which books, albeit that they neither can be there printed without great cost, nor here sold without great adventure and peril, yet cease they not with money sent from hence, to print them there [abroad] and send them hither by the whole vats full at once, and in some places, looking for no lucre, cast them abroad by night, so great a pestilent pleasure have some devilish people caught, with the labour, travail, cost, charge, peril, harm, and hurt of themselves, to seek the destruction of others. As the devil hath a deadly delight to beguile good people, and bring their souls into everlasting torment, without any manner winning, and not without final increase of his eternal pain; so do these heretics, the devil's disciples, set their whole pleasure and study to their own final damnation, in the training of simple souls to hell by their devilish heresies" (*English Works*, 344). More's attitude is fully and excellently discussed by Miss M. Deanesly in different places of her *Lollard Bible* (see index). (8) F. M. Powicke, *Christian Life in the M.A.* 83. (9) Grosseteste's *Letters* (R.S.), 317; E. K. Chambers, *Med. Stage*, II. 98; Creizenach in *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.* IV. 37. (10) *Handlyng Synne* (E.E.T.S.), I. 1303. (11) T. Wright and J. O. Halliwell, *Reliquiae Antiquae*, II. 45. (12) *York Mem. Book* (S.S.), II. cxxv; cf. XLIX. 124, 245. For this absurd legend of Fergus see L. Toulmin Smith, *York Mystery Plays*, xxviii ff. I give fuller evidence, with a woodcut from a panel at Notre-Dame-de-Paris, in my *Life in the Middle Ages*, II. 139-41. Fergus, or Belzeray, was a wicked Jew who laid hands upon the Virgin Mary's bier when she was carried to her tomb, and whose hands miraculously clave to the wood and broke off from his own arms. The full story is in *The Golden Legend* (Temple Classics, IV. 239). (13) A. W. Pollard, *Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse*, 99ff. (14) W. W. Capes, *English Church in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 209. (15) M. Deanesly, *Lollard Bible*, 117, 122ff. It is necessary here to expose the inexplicable misstatement in the Preface to the current *Roman Index of Prohibited Books*, published by Cardinal Merry del Val in the name of a Pope who has filled one of the greatest librarian's posts in Europe (1929, p. xi). This Preface stigmatizes as a mere calumny the idea that

"the Church put obstacles in the way of printing and using the Bible in the vulgar tongue". In disproof of this "calumny", it is asserted that "during the 70 years which elapsed between the invention of printing and the publication of Luther's German version, more than 200 editions of the Scriptures [*della Scrittura*] in various vernacular [*correnti*] languages, duly approved by the Church, were spread among the people." This total is evidently arrived at by reckoning as "la Scrittura" such piecemeal publications as a Psalter or a "Plenary" (i.e. the Epistles and Gospels used at Mass). The assertion "approved by the Church" is still more inconsistent with the actual facts. (16) Printed in full by J. Jortin, *Erasmus*, II. 678. (17) *Opp.* (1706), VII (Prefatory matter to vols VI and VII).

#### CHAPTER 50 (353-364)

(1) The best book on this subject is still that of R. G. Moulton, *The Literary Study of the Bible* (1906). (2) E. Michael, *Salimbene und seine Chronik* (Innsbruck, 1889), 123. (3) B. F. Westcott, *Hist. Eng. Bible* (2nd ed.), 82. (4) Quoted in *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.* IV. 42.

#### CHAPTER 51 (pp. 365-381)

(1) B, I. 7. (2) See my *Medieval Study*, XIX, "Mr Belloc as Historian" (72 Kimberley Road, Cambridge, 6d. post-free), 4. (3) Foxe's *Martyrs* (Parker Soc. 1844), III. 594; *Social Life*, 462. (4) A. Jessopp, *Diocesan Hist. Norwich* (S.P.C.K.), 148. (5) Tyndale's *Answer to More* (Parker Soc. 1850), 97. (6) Some readers may be glad to have further details of Erasmus's agreement on many points with Margery Backster, with references. *Pilgrimages, or Becket*, Ep. 592 (Jortin, *Erasmus*, II. 194, 207). *Bishops* (Jortin, II. 226). *Bible-reading by the unlearned* he constantly advocated, and reprobated its prohibition. As to *Images and Saints*, he points out in "The Praise of Folly" that the first Christians "prayed to God: they did not know that to pray to a figure drawn with charcoal on a wall would be equally efficacious". Compare Ep. 1072 (c. 1227): "while our churches are filled everywhere with unseemly [*indecoris*] paintings, we are falling almost into idolatry of these superstitions"; cf. Jortin, II. 198: "These things are remnants of ancient paganism" and Ep. 974 (c. 1104). *Fasting*, Ep. 974 (c. 1100, A.D. 1528): "In France, as men write [to me], two men are in danger [of death? *periclitantur*] for no other cause than that, compelled by sickness, they have eaten flesh on two days in Lent"; cf. Jortin, II. 210. *Clerical morals and impurity*; he speaks of "those who by artifice or by fear are thrust into celibacy,

so that they have licence to fornicate [*scortari liceat*] but not to marry: thus, if they profess concubinage, they are Catholic priests, but, if they prefer to take wives, they are cast into the fire" (Jortin, II. 206; cf. 214: "nowadays the number of incontinent priests is so enormous [*ingens*] as contrasted with such rarity of those who live chastely"). *Monastic morals* are attacked with equal force. (7) Jortin, *Erasmus*, II. 226. Compare the quotations from Sir John Fortescue printed in my *Social Life*, 31. (8) Cf. his *Paraphrase on St Matthew xxiii.* 27 and F. Seebohm, *Oxford Reformers* (Everyman), 179ff. (9) *Opp.* (1703), I. 787ff.; cf. 800-2, x. 502. (10) *Opera*, x. 1202ff. The reference to Jews in my text is reinforced by a passage elsewhere (note on Matt. xi. 30, *Opera*, vi) where Erasmus points out a text from St Augustine, who complained that the Church, even in his day, had so many petty observances "that it is more intolerable than the condition of the Jews, who, though they have not recognized the days of [Christian] liberty, are yet subjected to burdens of [God's] law, not to human presumptions". In this letter to the Bishop of Basel he points out how such superfluous traditions defeat their own purpose. "On no day are the kitchens more busy than on a fish-day, nor is the elaboration ever greater or the expense heavier. The upshot is, that poor folk hunger, and the rich live even more delicately. Who would not rather eat a silurus (which the common folk call *sturgeon*) or a trout or lamprey, than smoked swine-flesh or mutton? . . . To forbid flesh in regions where fish are rare is in effect to decree famine. . . . Nowadays St Paul's saying is everywhere fulfilled: *One is hungry and another is drunken*. To the rich, change of food is a pleasure and a relief from monotony: nor do they ever lead a more delightful life than when they abstain from flesh food. Meanwhile, however, the indigent husbandman, gnawing a raw root or a leek, adds this as a seasoning to his black bran-bread; and, instead of the rich man's wine, he drinks butter-milk, or pond-water, while with unceasing sweat of his brow he scarce maintains his wife and little children and the rest of his household. . . . It may be pleaded: 'If any man be aggrieved by these things, he hath a remedy: let him buy permission to eat from the pope at Rome.' Very true: but not all men have the opportunity or the money to buy an indulgence of this kind: and here, again, the upshot is the same; the rich man, who most needed a flesh-prohibition, who most needed to fast, commonly enjoys relaxation of this decree, while the grievous yoke presses only upon the humble poor man." If relaxation is just as all, let the parish priest have that power, for he knows his man; and let it be granted without fee. The parson has rights of absolution from far worse offences than this: "if he be unfit to grant dispensation in these slight cases, then the fault lies with the bishop who has committed Christ's flock to such a man." The tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse imposed a network of laws, with the set purpose of reaping rich revenues from the multitude who would certainly



break them; therefore "for the purity of Church discipline, it would be most advantageous that no just relaxation should be sold for money, and that the power were committed to those who know the man". Moreover, priests and bishops sometimes preach that violation is actually a mortal sin; that the fast-breaker will go to hell. To this Erasmus recurs over and over again in this treatise. "God", he pleads, "is not so severe or irritable as that he should, for any fault, cast those into hell whom He hath redeemed with His own blood." Yet "the bishops, whose office it is to defend men with the sword of God's word, claim for the sake of food and drink, which Christ hath put into our own power, that whosoever breaketh their decree goeth utterly to hell. . . . Paul is indignant that any man should judge his brother in the matter of meat and drink; and shall I for the sake of these things thrust my brother into hell? . . . The flesh-eater we execrate as though he had ceased to be a Christian, though the Gospel forbiddeth us to judge any man in things not evil in themselves. . . . Certainly he who condemneth his brother, who revileth him and bringeth railing accusation against him, sinneth against both Gospel teaching and the Pauline precept; and, in my opinion, his is a more grievous trespass than if he ate flesh for ten years on end. Men call flesh-eaters *Lutherans* and *heretics*: but to speak thus is to gnaw the flesh not of calves but of our own brother. Which is the greater crime? Yet no man is troubled in spirit by that which the Gospels and St Paul forbid, while we are as horrified in these matters which human custom has brought in, above and beyond the Gospel teaching, as if the whole Christian religion were about to fall at one stroke!" (11) *Opp.* x. 512. (12) Jortin, *Erasmus*, II. 170, 668. (13) *Ibid.* 670-3, 686. (14) *English Works* (1557), 873, 937. (15) *Encyc. Brit.* IX. 731. (16) G. Durandus, *De Modo Generalis Concilii habendi* (Paris, 1671), II. 10, 46. (17) It was under Clement VII, the Pope who negotiated with Henry VIII, that the earliest surviving census of the city of Rome was made (1527). The total population was a little over 55,000. The document is specially valuable as giving the households one by one, with the number of souls in each, and usually the occupier's profession and place of origin. The editor notes how the clergy and papal courtiers were mainly congregated in the three districts of Borgo, Ponte, and Parione, where twenty of the cardinals had their palaces, the remaining five being scattered over eleven other districts. Concerning these three specially clerical districts he writes: "In these, which were populated mainly by celibates, it was natural that there should be a greater number of courtesans, who however abounded in the other districts also. In most cases they are not distinguished here, as in [another census], by their professional title; but all these single women may be easily recognized by their plain *noms de guerre*—Imperia, Lucrezia, Giulia, Alessandra, Pipa, Nanna—with the country of their origin." In the first half-column of Borgo, for instance, we find that

Baldassena has indeed a trade, of spice-seller; but there are three others registered simply as "Lucia of Bologna, Isabel of Rome, Gabriela of Cremona", side by side with "Raphael the Jew". In this, which was the quarter of the Vatican Palace, 155 out of the 563 houses are thus kept by single women. For the whole city, with its 9285 houses, 1455 are similarly occupied. In many cases the census records their origin: 816 from different parts of Italy and 272 from abroad. These last range from 116 Spaniards, 56 French, 52 German, to 1 English-woman. See *Archivio della soc. rom. di storia patria*, xvii (1894), 375ff.; and G. de Manteyer, *Le Livre-Journal tenu par Fazy de Rame* (Gap. 1932), I. 353. (18) *Opp.* x. 1201. (19) *Loci e Libro Veritatum* (ed. J. E. T. Rogers), 24, 32, 63. (20) J. H. Lupton, *Life of Colet*, 71. (21) *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, 123. Gascoigne held the Chancellorship of Oxford University for many years; and his book, apart from its pessimistic bitterness, is essentially true to its title. Compare this testimony with the bold denial of Cardinal Gasquet (*Eve of Ref.* 437): "In the literature of the period [preceding the Reformation], there is nothing to show that the true nature of a 'pardon' or Indulgence was not fully and commonly understood. There is no evidence that it was in any way interpreted as a remission of sin, still less that any one was foolish enough to regard it as permission to commit this or that offence against God." It is characteristic that the pontifical confidence of this assertion has led two other prominent Roman Catholic scholars into the same ditch of error; Bishop Hedley in his article on Indulgences in *The Nineteenth Century* for Jan. 1901 (p. 170) and Fr H. Thurston, S.J., in his attack upon Dr H. C. Lea (*Dublin Review*, Jan. 1900, art. no. 1). In Belgium, Charles V himself complained in 1515 of the Indulgence system as working "to the great burden, damage and loss of my subjects and of this country, which would end by involving their complete ruin". And on Aug. 18, 1517, more than two months before Luther's appearance on the scene, a Dutch monk wrote in the same sense: "Great sums are taken out of the country: it is difficult to say or write how much. . . . Inconsiderate layfolk chatter unwisely about this. . . . Contributions [are raised] for fighting the Turks or for Indulgences, but, alas! without ever reaching the effect and the holy object in the name of which they send us these pardons. . . . I maintain that the Netherlands famed beyond all other countries for the independence and pride of their inhabitants, were never shorn and burdened yearly by such heavy tributes under the tyranny of the pagan Emperors of Rome, as they have been for the last 200 years, thanks to these ruses and intrigues." Moreover, in 1516 a book was printed at Deventer, under the rule of the Prince-bishop of Utrecht, by the Benedictine Abbess of Mariendaal. Writing in Flemish, for popular reading, she tells how a monk came back after death to his friend in the cloister, and told how he had been turned back by St Peter because his Letter of Indulgence, though perfectly *en règle* so far

as the papal chancery was concerned, lacked the seal of Jesus Christ. Again, how another was cast, Indulgence and all, into the bottomless pit by a devil of Teutonic speech, who knew no Latin. Upon which the abess comments "Alas! how often must this German-speaking devil have dragged down to hell these folk who believe not in what the Bible teaches, but who trust to the bulls of pardon which they have gotten!" P. Frédéricq, *Bull. Classe Lettres de l'Acad. royale de Belgique* (1899), 42, 6. (22) Crump and Jacob, *Legacy of the M.A.* 39.

## CHAPTER 52 (pp. 382-395)

(1) Erasmus, *Opp.* x. 1208-9. (2) Jortin, *Erasmus*, II. 695-6. (3) Rashdall, *Universities*, I. 362, note. (4) *Direct. Inquis.* pars III, q. cviii, § 3 (ed. 1585, p. 708); cf. Lea, *Inquis. M. Ages*, I. 530: "But nowadays, since heretical pravity hath been so far extirpated that pertinacious heretics are rare, and rarer still those who relapse, and rarest of all are rich heretics, but [such as we have] are poor (to wit Fraticelli or Béquines or Waldensians), therefore the temporal lords do not get such frequent confiscations of goods as of old, and therefore they are unwilling to pay the Inquisitors so that inquisitions may be made at their [the lords'] expense"—or possibly "the inquisitions are [now] made at the Inquisitors' expense". (5) More himself does not hesitate to jest upon this. In *Utopia* (p. 43) he makes Cardinal Morton's jester allude to the beggars' feeling towards a stingy man: they expect no more help from him "than if [he] were a priest or a monk". The Dissolution cannot be fully understood without such documentary evidence as Mr G. Baskerville has just published in his *English Monks and the Suppression of the Monasteries* (1937). See note 9 here below. (6) *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, 70. (7) *A Treatise concernynge the division betwene the spiritualitye and the temporalitie*, f. 26a. (8) Wilkins, *Concilia* (1st ed.), I. 549. (9) R. L. Poole *Essays*, 443. Mr Baskerville has now printed in a single volume the scattered evidence which his researches of years have collected. He shows conclusively, from manuscript and printed documents which he has been the first to study exhaustively, that the dispossessed Religious under Henry VIII were incomparably better treated than those who were cast adrift not only by the French Revolution and the Spanish Revolution of 1836, but even by the most orthodox Charles III of Spain (see esp. p. 285). See note 5 here above. (10) See my *Five Centuries of Religion* (II. 527-31), where I have printed half-a-dozen of his plainest utterances. In that volume (pp. 505ff.) 140 pages are filled with contemporary generalizations by orthodox Churchmen about the monasteries from the twelfth to the sixteenth century; the overwhelming majority are unfavourable, and often in language which

would be thought bigoted in a modern historian. This remains true even in face of the two favourable judgments, unknown to me, supplied by Dr A. G. Little in *History* for January 1929. Gascoigne (p.68), quoted St-Cher as witness for the fact "that all men whom he had known, possessing such plurality of Church livings [as was lamentably frequent everywhere], before their death, had been compelled by their conscience to confess that they had lived damnably by holding two benefices, whereas one sufficed for their needs". (11) *Cal. State Papers (Spain)*, iv. i. 367. (12) Pollard, *Henry VIII*, 206; *Jesuits and the Middle Ages*, 9. (13) See my pamphlet on *Malta and Beyond*, where I give facts which nobody has ventured to contradict. (This and the preceding pamphlet are published at 6d. each post-free from 72 Kimberley Road, Cambridge.) (14) R. W. Chambers, *St Thomas More*, 369 (cf. 367). (15) Dr Barry in *Camb. Mod. Hist.* i. 646.



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